

**Studies in the  
History of India  
with Special Reference to  
Tamil Nadu**

**Dr. K.K.PILLAY**

## STUDIES IN INDIAN HISTORY

With Special Reference to  
Tamil Nadu

This collection of my articles constitutes a selected number of speeches and essays bearing on Indian History, many of which pertain to Tamil Nadu. Some themes dealt with are of importance for the whole of India. The caste system of Tamil Nadu, on which there has been a wide disparity between theory and practice, for instance, is of relevance to the rest of India as well. I have adopted a candid and outspoken approach to this question and have deliberately dedicated the book to the late lamented Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. My conviction is that a few jobs or houses for the backward classes do not by themselves constitute a remedy for the injustice done to them over the ages. I feel that the ideals of a rejuvenated Theosophical Society or the revival of the age-old Hinayana Buddhism alone will tend to remedy the unfortunate evils which had multiplied themselves in the past. Mahatma Gandhi opened the eyes of the people, but he was not for the abolition of the Varnashrama Dharma. A casteless society and human brotherhood is my ideal. I welcome honest and unprejudiced criticisms. I may add that the longest paper provides for the first time a connected account of the history Nāñchi-nād, the southernmost region of India.

# **STUDIES IN INDIAN HISTORY**

**(WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO TAMIL NĀDU)**

**By**

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Published in 1979.

Rs. 100
Price \$ 12
£ 5

Copies can be had at:—

28, II Main Road, Kasturbanagar,  
Adyar, Madras-600 020.

Printed at Rathnam Press, No. 41, Badrian Street, Madras-600 001.

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**DEDICATED TO THE LATE  
Dr. B. R. AMBEDKAR**

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## P R E F A C E

On the request of some friends and students of mine I am publishing a selection of my articles which I had contributed to the various Journals as well as addresses delivered at Historical Associations. The Journals are chiefly the Journal of Indian History, the Madras University Journal, Tamil Culture, Madras, International Institute of Foreign Affairs, Madras, the Kalakshetra Quarterly and the Indo-British Journal. The Presidential addresses include those delivered at the Indian History Congress, Jubbulpore, 1970, at the History Assoications in the Madurai Kamaraj, the Annamalai and Calicut Universities, the Presidency College, Pachaiyappa's College and the Christian College, Madras. Some of them have been amplified and others reduced. Repetitions are bound to occur, but they have been avoided as far as possible.

I thank all the institutions which have permitted me to utilize the articles printed by them. My thanks are due to the staff of the Institute of Traditional Cultures for helping me in the correction of the proofs and in the preparation of the Index. I thank the Rathnam Press for doing the work speedily and satisfactorily. I am indebted to Dr. C. E. Ramachandran, Professor and Head of the Department of Indian History, University of Madras, for lending me reprints of some of my articles. I thank also Dr. S. Kadhirvel, Lecturer in History, University of Madras and Dr. P. Shanmukham, Lecturer in Ancient History and Archaeology, University of Madras, for evincing an interest in the publication of this work.

(K. K. PILLAY)



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A. R. E.	Annual Reports on Epigraph
A. S. S. I.	Archaeological Survey of Southern India
E. I.	Epigraphia Indica
I. A.	Indian Antiquary
I. J. O. R.	Indian Journal of Oriental Research
J. R. A. S.	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, London
M. E. R.	Madras Epigraphical Report
S. I. I.	South Indian Inscriptions
T. A. R.	Travancore Archaeological Reports
T. A. S.	Travancore Archaeological Series

## NOTE ON DIACRITICAL MARKS

Long vowels are indicated thus : ā

Ch represents ḍ

Chch „ ḍḍ

ṭ „ ḥ

ṭ „ ṣ

t „ ḥ

ṇ „ ḡ

ñ „ ḡ

ñ „ ḡ

r „ ṣ

r „ ṣ

rra „ ḡḍ

ś „ ḡ

s „ ḡ (In respect of common words like Vishnu, sh. is employed).

kṣ „ ḡṣ

No distinction, however, is made between ḡ and ḡ. Common names like Nagercoil and Madras are shown without diacritical marks.

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## I. Historical Studies in India

The spirit of historical inquiry was conspicuously lacking in India. Alberūnī, the discerning scholar who visited India in the 11th century A.D., was among those who have lamented this drawback among Indians. R. Sathianathier's attempted defence that the much-regretted absence of an Indian Thucydides can be questioned with the aid of Kalhaṇa is hardly sustainable. For one thing, Kalhaṇa's *Rājatarangiṇī* is a defective historical composition<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, Kalhaṇa belongs to the 12th century A.D., more than 15 centuries after Herodotus and Thucydides. Further, Kalhaṇa was not followed by other historians in the country.

The position was hardly better in respect of South India. Bilhana's *Vikramāñkacharita* of the 11th century A.D. is supposed by some to be the counterpart of the *Rājatarangiṇī*. But unlike the latter, Bilhana's work is only an eulogy of his patron, Vikramāditya VI, and is unquestionably defective as an historical composition. The *Unṇunilisandēśam*, the Malayalam work of the 14th century, is hardly historical; it refers only to certain local kingdoms of Vēṇāḍ of the time. In fact, a professedly historical work in any of the languages of South India is conspicuous by its absence in the past. The religion-oriented outlook, nurtured on the doctrine of Karma, militated against a faithful record of mundane activities.

Chronology is the bed-rock of history, and there are numberless riddles in the chronology of South Indian history. P. T. Sri-nivasa Aiyanagar, the ripe scholar, who has rendered valuable service to the cause of historical research, was a little too despondent when he wrote: "If chronology is the eye of History, Ancient Indian History will have to be always blind." The

present position provides scope for a slightly more optimistic view of the situation. Nevertheless, there are numerous institutions and literary works of the past in respect of which little more than an approximate determination of the chronology is possible in the present state of our knowledge.

With the advent of the Muslims there was a change for the better. Besides histories of North India, there are some bearing on the Deccan. The *Futuh-us-Salatin* by Isāmi is a contemporary work of the 14th century on the Bahmani kingdom. Later works on the Bahmani kingdom included the Burhani Maasir of Āli bin Azizullah Taba Tabai Simmin. But these were little better than chronicles of local dynasties. Beyond doubt Ferishṭa is the prince of Muslim historians of this period of South Indian history. He narrates the relations of the Deccan Muslim power with Vijayanagar, but occasionally confuses the names of the Vijayanagar rulers. It is now accepted that he failed to assess the role of Krishṇadēvarāya in the proper manner. Moreover, his account of the battle of Talikōṭa is one-sided.

Next to the Muslim writers, in respect of South India, the contribution made by the Missionaries is remarkable. Some took an interest in the study of languages, including Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Sanskrit and they investigated into the social and literary history. Though occasionally their inner motive coloured their accounts, it must be admitted that they presented elaborate descriptions of great value.

The European, and particularly British, writers like E. J. Rapson, A. A. Macdonell and L. D. Barnett concentrated on Sanskrit and North India and the early writers were concerned more with religion and literature than with history as such. In the course of time several British writers devoted their attention to the modern period of Indian history. The rise and establishment of British supremacy and the history of British administration were the important themes which attracted a galaxy of

British historians. James Mill, Elliott, Elphinstone, Tolboys Wheeler, Sewell, V. A. Smith, P. E. Roberts and Percival Spear are some of these historians, though the quality of their writings naturally varies with the individual writers.

In spite of the increasing number of British scholars who devoted their attention to Indian history there were certain drawbacks. In the first place, as stated earlier, most of these historians concentrated their attention on North India. It was perhaps natural that the region which witnessed the rise of several empires like those of Maurya, Gupta, Harshavardhana, the Delhi Sultanate, Moghul and British should have dominated the picture. A significant example of the neglect of South India is found in the case of Vijayanagar. It was only so late as 1900 that the rise and development of Vijayanagar, the so-called 'Forgotten Empire' was made known to the world by Robert Sewell. Vincent Smith was the first British historian to deplore the neglect of South Indian history. He said that 'attention has been concentrated too long on the North, on Sanskrit books, and on Indo-Āryans'. He added that 'it is time that due regard should be paid to the non-Aryan element.' Among South Indian scholars, Professor Sundaram Pillai said: 'The scientific historian of India ought to begin his study with the basin of Krishṇa, of the Kāveri and of the Vaigai rather than with the Gangetic plain, as has been now long, too long the fashion.'

Secondly, the British historians concentrated pre-eminently on political history. By and large the writers of the modern period were administrative historians. Macaulay, Malleson, Maine, Hunter, Lyall and Vincent Smith were some of these outstanding writers. Inevitably they focussed their attention on political and administrative history and even in this respect their attention to the south of the Vindhya range was but meagre. It must be noticed in this context that District Manuals and District Gazetteers, compiled by competent I.C.S. men, have devoted

some attention to political and administrative, as well as to social history.

Moreover, the observations of many of the earlier British writers were coloured by an attitude of superiority complex. Notions of racial and cultural superiority coupled with a failure to understand and appreciate the traditional milieu of the land vitiated the balanced approach to the study of the people's history.

Despite the above-mentioned shortcomings the lamentable feature of modern historiography in respect of north and south Indian history is the conspicuous fall in the number of British historians of India. Their wide knowledge, scientific approach to the themes and masterly analysis, subject to the above-mentioned limitations, have become practically lost to the world of historical scholarship. In the post-Independence era, the number of outstanding British writers on Indian history has become deplorably low.

Perhaps in a small measure, the decline of British interest is compensated by the increasing body of Indian scholars. Several Indians, both of North and South India have entered the field and made their own contributions. In my view it is desirable that more students belonging to North India should take to the study of South Indian history and vice versa. Nilmani Mukherjee's Thesis on the Ryotwari system in Madras is a break-through in the right direction. A detached and objective approach can be normally expected from non-local writers, who must undoubtedly become well equipped for the task through intensive study. Even the perspective of national unity in the historiography of India can be promoted by such attempts in a considerable measure.

It is common knowledge that during the last three or four decades, the number of post-graduate students turning to the

field of research on Indian history has increased. But it is an open question whether the quality of their output is commendable. Apart from the integrity of their own efforts which are tested, if at all, rather superficially, the standard of their productions leaves much to be desired. It may not be long before a Ph. D. becomes a more formal pass-port to certain kinds of scheduled appointments. In reality, genuine research and original contributions should be attempted by mature and well-equipped scholars. Post-doctoral research is of supreme importance.

By far the most imperative need of the hour in the field of research in humanities is the development of an objective outlook.<sup>2</sup> In recent times a narrow patriotism has engulfed the fields of study both in the Universities and outside. Often an undercritical and uncritical adulation of the past imbued by sentimentalism is in evidence. Chauvinism, regionalism, linguism and communalism threaten the objective approach to history. It has been doubted legitimately by some whether a truly objective attitude can be expected to be developed. But this despondent apprehension is likely to vanish with the growth of time and promotion of real scholarship. An inter-state and an international widening of the range of scholars in the field of Indian history is bound to provide a proper corrective in the long run. There are enthusiasts of the revolutionary camp who project their ideals into the past history; they must be shown their level. What is not so well known is that there are powerful cliques of reactionaries who pull strings surreptitiously from Kanyakumari to Kashmir. It is now apprehended that some of those who profess nationalism are at heart rank communalists. They are often guilty of what may be called negative chauvinism;<sup>3</sup> they condemn certain languages and certain sections of people in order to exalt themselves indirectly. Time alone will reveal the subtle and disruptive forces working against an impartial approach to historical studies. John Morley, the famous

writer, asks the following pertinent questions. "Who does not know that it is the first law of history not to dare a word that is false? Next, not to shrink from a word that is true. No partiality, no grudge. Though nobody disputes the obvious answers, have a majority of historical practitioners complied?"

In this connection the new enthusiasm evinced by foreign and particularly American scholars is to be welcomed. But till now a few of them have concentrated only on recent or current history. There are attempts on the study of the rise and development of the D.K., D.M.K., and Self-Respect and Non-Brahmin movements and sociological studies of particular communities like the Nāḍārs and the Right Hand and Left Hand castes of Tamil Nādu. Comparatively these are easy themes and they touch only the later fringe of the history of the Tamils, though they are by no means unimportant. A more systematic attempt should be made at unravelling the problems concerning the various periods of North and South Indian history. Bands of scholars should specialise in the mastery of South Indian languages as well as Sanskrit, South Indian epigraphy, literature and manuscripts pertaining to the modern period. In this connection mention may be made of the wealth of original materials available in the Tamil Nādu Archives with the aid of which a well-directed scheme of research can be organized.

This raises the question as to the branches of history on which further research remains to be undertaken. In my view a water-tight division between the different aspects of history, like the political, constitutional, administrative, economic, social and cultural, is neither desirable nor practicable in all cases. Events, movements and tendencies in one field are influenced by those in another and in their turn they react on other fields of activities. Therefore, a rigid compartmentalism should be avoided while taking care to eschew redundant overlapping. Really, history must be studied as a social science.

For example, the recent tendency to bifurcate archaeological from historical studies leads to imperfect and lopsided approaches. The history of culture including that of architecture, sculpture, iconography and painting cannot be investigated without reference to the political and social background.

Nor can political history be based exclusively on epigraphy. In fact, in respect of early South Indian history, too great an emphasis on epigraphy as a source, has often resulted in a distorted and one-sided approach to history. All the claims of epigraphy to veracity are not sustainable. Every thing found engraved on rock or metal is not gospel truth. Moreover, there are numberless instances of the statements occurring in inscriptions which yield more than one meaning. The engravers' errors or slip-shod executions have led to different readings. Contradictions found in the extravagant claims of different personalities registered in epigraphs are as problematic as those in literary or other sources of history.

Unwarranted glorification of kings and their achievements are found in several inscriptions. For instance, the Tāndatōṭṭam Plates and the Kaśakkudi grant provide exaggerated descriptions regarding the exploits of Nandivarman Pallava Malla. The birudas of Rājasimha (Narasimhavarman II) are grossly inflated. They include comparisons with the divine qualities such as those Subrahmaṇya, Śiva and Brihaspati. A clear instance of incredible exaggeration is found in the Kūram Plates (S. I. I. Vol. I, p. 144) which speak of the battle of Perumvalanallūr. It is stated that the Chālukyan army consisting of 'several lakshas' was put to flight by Paramēśvara-varman I and that its leader retreated 'covered only by a rag.'

In the Larger Sinnamanūr Plates Śrī Māra Śrī Vallabha Pāṇḍya is stated to have brought the entire world under his umbrella. The Praśastis of Meykkīrtigal beginning from the

time of Rāja Rāja Chōla I indulge in incredible genealogies. They depended on the fancies of the poet-composer of the praśastis. In some of these the statements made about the same king are contradictory. For instance, the legendary genealogies in the Anbil, the Tiruvālangādu and Karāndai Plates and the Kanyākumari stone inscriptions are all fantastic and untrustworthy.

On the other hand, certain inscriptions are not exhaustive in their accounts as compared with the literary sources. For instance, the Pallava inscriptions do not refer to battles other than Tellāru among those fought by Nandivarman III. But, the Nandikkalambakam refers to battles such as those of Kadambūr, Kurukkōṭṭai, Tonḍi, Paṭṭayāru and Vellāru. The battles of Kōṭṭāru, Naraiyūr and Vilinām mentioned by the Iraiyanār Ahapporul are not referred to in inscriptions.

Again, there is no reference in Pallava epigraphs to the naval expeditions to Śrī Laṅka during the reign of Narasimha-varman 1 in order to reinstate Mānavaṛma on the Simhaṭa throne. On the other hand, a vivid account of them is found in the Mahāvamśa. Nor do we find any direct reference to the maritime conquests and trade or to embassies from China to Rājasimha in any of the inscriptions. But the literary references available in Tirumaṅgai Ālvar's hymns and in the Nandikkalambakam to ships and to the naval strength of the Pallavas provide testimony to their maritime activities. Regarding Mahābalipuram as a sea-port no reference to its foreign trade on pearls and elephants is found in the Pallava inscriptions, while specific mention about it is provided by Tirumaṅgai Ālvar.

Thus, epigraphs have to be carefully scrutinised in utilising them as sources of history. Nor is literature totally dependable for the reconstruction of history. The poetic fancies, over-statements and exaggerations vitiate the historical value of literature. Even semi-historical compositions have their

limitations. But generalisations are unwarranted. In respect of certain data, particularly those relating to chronology, epigraphy as well as numismatics provide often decisive clues. The imperative need is a critical utilisation of the various sources without preconceived notions.

The coordination of the different but allied branches of history is equally important. Not only the different aspects of archaeology and literature, religion and philosophy, but sociology and anthropology yield essential aids to the reconstruction of social history. It is interesting to find that in some American Universities candidates qualify themselves in more than one branch of social studies. For instance, Thomas R. Trautmann holds a B.A. in Anthropology from Beloit College and a Ph.D. in History from the University of London. He is the author of a book on Kauṭilya and the Arthaśāstra, while he has contributed a paper on Cross-Cousin Marriage in Ancient India. Again, Narendra K. Wagle took his Ph.D. in History from the University of London, and followed it up by post-doctoral study at the University of Chicago. He now holds the post of Associate Professor in the Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies, University of Toronto. One of his publications is 'Society at the Time of the Buddha'. It cannot be claimed that all these studies are thorough and systematic. But they show the importance of the coordination of the different branches of social sciences. An interdisciplinary approach in the researches on history and other social sciences is essential.

In fact there is a supreme need for the study of the social history of the various regions and sections of the people in India. History is no longer the chronicle of kings and queens, wars and treaties but is an account of the life of the people through the ages. After all it has to be remembered that history is to be studied not for satisfying antiquarian curiosity, but to understand the present, and if possible, to foretell the future.

This is particularly so in respect of social history. For instance, it is important to know how the caste system arose in India, what changes it witnessed through the ages, what tendencies are found at the present epoch and what the future of the caste is likely to be in the light of recent developments. These are all themes of fascinating interest and practical value. Again, how did untouchability emerge, what forms did it take in the various epochs of the past, and what changes have appeared during recent times in untouchability, unapproachability and unseeability? These are also questions of paramount interest.

Fortunately, an increasing measure of attention is being paid in recent years to this neglected field by the University of Madras. In my estimate, one of the historians who gave the proper lead in this direction was the late P T. Srinivasa Iyengar. His 'History of the Tamils', though not exhaustive, constitutes a good beginning in studying the early history of the Tamils. Further, he did not have any communal or linguistic prejudice or partiality. Much more has to be done in respect of the later periods of the history of Tamil Nādu and other regions on the same lines, utilising the relevant sources in a critical and judicious manner. It is hoped that budding historians would come forward and forge ahead and provide a full and dependable picture of the history of Indian society and culture.

#### **Recent Tendencies in Historical research :**

It is well known that the three early Universities of India, established in 1857, were organised on the model of the London University. Consequently they were at the outset primarily affiliating and examining bodies. There was no provision for research or advance of original knowledge. By about the end of the century, certain educationists expressed their dissatisfaction with the position and therefore it was felt necessary to provide facilities for research. Early in this century the Government of India bestowed certain grants of money on the three

Universities for the purpose of encouraging research, and one of the subjects chosen for the provision of advanced study was History. Thus, for example, in the University of Madras, a Professor of Indian History and Archaeology was appointed in 1914 with the help of the special grant given by the Government of India. Studentships were instituted and good work was done.

Since then, there has occurred an expansion of the Departments of Indian History in the older Universities, while the large number of new Universities that have appeared during the last thirty years or so, have opened Departments of Indian History, which provide scope for teaching and research. Some Universities like Andhra and Kerala concentrate mainly on the teaching of History. In others, while commendable work is being done in the field of research, there are several shortcomings which demand attention.

In the first place, historical research is not assigned the place it deserves in the scheme of advanced study. The ever-increasing craze for Science in recent times has had a repercussion on the importance attached to humanistic studies in general and to history in particular. This circumstance has affected the proportion of funds spent on the organisation of the Departments of History, its staff, library, research fellowships etc. The comparative neglect of History as a subject of study and research is perhaps more conspicuous in South India than in the North.

A basic factor to be noticed in this connection is that the better type of students is not generally drawn to History. This is partly due to the glamour of Applied Sciences and the greater scope of employment afforded for students offering other subjects in the Humanities section. This tendency has to be arrested and it is suggested that, other things being equal, candidates well grounded in History should be given a preference in administrative and secretarial services.

There has been a conspicuous lack of appreciation of advanced study and research in historical subjects. This is not perhaps surprising; even in Europe it was long before History was given its legitimate status in the educational field. Classics, Philosophy, Mathematics and the Natural Sciences occupied the dominant place. Greek and Roman histories were studied only as adjuncts to the Classics. The 19th century witnessed in Europe a real enthusiasm for history and historical writing. Many outstanding historical works of permanent value were produced during that age. As Gooch observes, the nineteenth century can be regarded as the 'Golden Age of Historical Writing'. The Phillipic thus given to the subject has exerted a great influence on the Universities of the West, and today, even though great strides are made in the study of sciences, history, like other humanities is by no means relegated to the background, though for a long time history was a neglected pursuit. But in India in the whole range of Sanskrit literature there is no other historical text which makes even a near approach to Kalhana's *Rājatarangiṇī* or may be regarded as history in the proper sense of the term'. (R. C. Mazumdar) Several explanations have been offered to account for the absence of historical spirit in India.<sup>4</sup> The importation of religious ideas and beliefs into the study of the past as well as the congregation of scholars in courts where critical historical writing was hardly encouraged were some of the factors responsible for a lack of progress in this field.

No wonder that in modern times, too, true historical research has not made much headway in our Universities. The problem has therefore to be tackled with great care.

### **Staff:**

In the first place, the organisation of well-staffed departments of History in all the Universities is a basic requirement.

It is preferable to have two sections, as in the Universities of Calcutta, Lucknow, Allahabad and Nagpur, one devoted to Ancient History and Culture, another to Medieval and Modern History. Since there is vast difference in the type of sources for medieval and modern history of India, it would be desirable to have three departments, Ancient, Medieval and Modern in the History sections of all the Universities. This would help intensive specialisation.

Each one of these Departments should have at least three members on the staff, a Professor, Reader and Lecturer. It is suggested that besides these, a well-qualified Research Assistant should also be attached to the Department. His or her services, if properly directed, would help save considerable time in the mechanical work of collecting and arranging source materials.

Whether the staff of the Department should be exclusively devoted to research or should combine their research with teaching is a question often discussed in academic circles. It is obvious that a certain measure of post-graduate (M.A.) teaching by the members of the University Department would be desirable. This helps not only the students but also the teachers who are also able to realise the difficulties of others. But overburdening the staff with routine lecturing work as is done in several of the Indian Universities is by no means a healthy practice. Little time would be left for the arduous task of research under such conditions.

The qualifications needed for the staff are well known, but are not always found to exist in practice. Dr. Selburne of Ruskin College, Oxford, rightly deplores the intellectual emasculation of Indian academicians. Recently there has been an insistence on Research Degree as essential qualifications of recruitment. These do not always yield the expected result. In actuality a well-established reputation through published

works and papers should be the criteria. Other factors like caste, religion and nativity of the region are irrelevant considerations but more often than not, they prove decisive.

Nor is it out of place to stress the fundamental virtues needed of historians and those who guide research. The most essential attribute of the historian is an unflinching respect for accuracy and truth. There must be absolute freedom from prejudice of any kind. In actual practice, however, this is not always achieved. It may be contended that even great historians of the past like Thucydides, Tacitus, Gibbon and Mommsen were not above board in this respect. V. A. Smith claimed that his object was to 'relate facts with impartiality and to discuss the problems of history in a judicial spirit.' But he admits that some measure of subjectivity is inevitable. He says: "Nor is it possible for the writer of history, however great may be his respect for objective fact, to eliminate altogether his own personality". Though he adds that he has 'endeavoured to exclude the subjective element as far as possible', he has lamentably failed to achieve it in several places.

Moreover, there must be true dedication to study and research<sup>5</sup>. Often we find the supervisors have more flare for intrigue or for writing text books than for genuine research.

Among Indian writers it is not infrequently found that there has appeared a tendency to exalt the past and read into the sources more than what is warranted. Regional and communal loyalties have vitiated a correct approach to questions. This is particularly true of the early period of Indian History, though even in respect of the medieval and modern periods too, these drawbacks have continued to appear. Despite all these shortcomings it cannot be held that the ideal is unrealisable. Writing and rewriting, corrected by frank and unbiased criticism, are bound to reveal the truth ultimately. In fact, among European historians,

Ranke and his pupil Lord Acton did achieve a commendable measure of accuracy and truth. Lecky attained a conspicuously high standard in his ‘History of European Morals.’

It is also important to observe that members of the staff should have a wide background of historical knowledge. Not infrequently specialists become too rigidly immersed in their narrow field of study. This is unsound. The specialist in the modern period of Indian History, for example, is better suited to tackle his work if he has a good grounding in British and European History. It is necessary for a researcher in Early Indian History to have a knowledge of Sanskrit and the regional language or languages, besides epigraphy, numismatics and similar branches of study. A knowledge of the allied social sciences like ethnology, anthropology, philosophy, psychology, political science and economics would prove helpful to researchers in History. Which of these subjects and what aspects of them would prove useful to the specialist in History would depend on the particular subject chosen for research. The dictum that ‘wants create activities, which in their turn, create fresh wants’ is true of human endeavour in all fields not excluding that of historical research.

In this connection it is important to emphasise, as mentioned earlier, that there should be coordination and cooperation between the various Departments of the University. Conditions in Indian Universities leave much to be desired. The mutual relations between members of various Departments of study are not what they should be. In several cases, mutual jealousy and ill-feeling are found to mar the healthy relations between intellectuals. There is not always the realisation that all are devotees striving for truth and knowledge. Much can be learnt in these matters from Western Universities. “Academic life” observes Alfred Kazim, “thrives on co-operative specialisation, on a body

of scholars who not only respond to one another, but all who need each other."

### **Research Students :**

It is equally important to have the proper type of research students. As found in some of the Universities there can be two categories of research workers—research students and research fellows, the former mostly younger pupils who have just completed their M.A. course and the latter, either those who had already taken a preliminary research degree like the M. Litt. or B. Litt., or teachers of some experience who turn to research. Generally speaking, there is more to be said in favour of encouraging researchers of the latter category, because, presumably they have a better grounding in History and have a better chance of bringing to bear a critical outlook on their researches.

The selection of the best candidates is of supreme importance. Normally the merit of the candidates as revealed by their previous educational career can be the basis of selection. But it does not always yield the best result. A selection by the Supervisor or Head of the Department assisted by other experts may prove helpful. It is hardly necessary to repeat that irrelevant considerations like religion, caste and personal affiliations should find no place in the selection of suitable candidates. In addition to the previous academic record the special equipments particularly in languages should be taken into account. For instance, those intending to do research on topics in early Indian History should preferably have had a good grounding in Sanskrit and the regional language or languages. It is suggested that for research fellowships or studentships in Early Indian History, M.As. in Sanskrit or any regional language or both can be chosen and subsequently given a training in historical method. As an alternative, those who have taken the M. A. Degree in History may be given a grounding in the languages necessary

for their research. Similarly those choosing the Medieval period of Indian History would find scholarship in Persian, Turkish and Urdu languages helpful. Candidates taking up Modern Indian History would do well to have a good grounding in modern European and Asiatic History. For certain subjects pertaining to the modern period a knowledge of languages like French, Portuguese or Dutch would prove helpful.

In this connection it may be suggested that some of the Universities in India may specialise on particular themes or subdivisions of a period. One or other member of the staff may have specialised in certain branches, and students from any part of India may go to the respective Universities. For instance, some Universities may specialise on the French period or Portuguese period of Indian History. It is time that Universities in India, besides providing for general research, establish a reputation for specialised research. Some Universities may concentrate on the history of Saivism or Vaishnavism in India. In this connection it may be mentioned that a Department of South East Asian History is organized in some of the South Indian Universities. The cultural expansion over South East Asia from South India deserves to be fully explored. A Department of Far Eastern History may be started with advantage in one of the North Indian Universities.

### **Choice of the Subject:**

It is hardly necessary to stress the importance of choosing the proper subject for research. More often than not, the candidate wants the Supervisor to suggest the subject of his research. Though there may be extenuating circumstances responsible for this tendency, it is by far better for the student to explore and discover his own interest and choose a subject suited to it. The exact nature of the subject may be finally decided upon in consultation with the Supervisor after an initial period of exploration.

The question of choosing the subject is closely connected with the range or scope of historical research. Political history has so far dominated the field. The scope of history is really much wider than the study of kings and ministers, wars and treaties. The history of the common men, of their social and religious life, of their culture and civilisation constitutes an important aspect of the history of a people. As Cohen put it: "Instead of the old restriction to the study of kings and dynasties, warriors and the like, there came also a more human conception of the proper province of history, to include ordinary social functions, such as games, social manners every day business transactions, all the things which constitute the substance of the daily life of men, women and children." More or less the same idea is emphasised by the American historian, Macmaster. He says: "The history of the people shall be the chief theme. At any stage of the splendid progress which separates the America of Washington and Adams from the America in which we live, it shall be my aim to describe the dress, occupations and amusements, literary canons of the times, to note the changes of manners and morals, to trace the growth of that humane spirit which abolished punishment for debt, reformed the discipline of prisons and jails, and which has, in our own times, destroyed slavery and lessened the miseries of dumb brutes."

As themes of social history, for example. the history of particular castes can be explored with advantage. South India, in particular, offers a fertile field of investigation in this respect. Equally important is the study of the great temples in the land. The temple was the pivot around which the life of the region developed. "Separate monographs on different temples will have to be written and written with care and discernment before we can attempt the general study of the rise and growth of the temple, and its place as a religious and social institution in South India." (K. A. N. Sastri).

### **Supervision :**

It need hardly be mentioned that supervision of research is very important. Generally speaking, conditions in Indian Universities in this respect leave much to be desired. It is not merely the indication of the subject, the bibliography or the lines of research or even the correction of the written matter that the Supervisor should be content with undertaking. On the other hand, supervision is really the provision of opportunity for mind moving with mind, a ‘collision of heads’, as it has been called. We often hear the personality and scholarship of the Professor exercising a subtle or a profound influence on the student. However, by and large in India this ideal remains all but a theoretical maxim at present. This is all the more regrettable because India had developed the Gurukula system of education. I have had opportunities of knowing something of the pattern of supervision provided in Madras as well as that in vogue in Oxford and London. To put it in a nutshell there is ample scope for improvement in this field in India.

Regular meetings of the Supervisor and student at stated hours is desirable. Free and frank discussions and a helpful attitude on the part of the Supervisor are of supreme importance. Seminars attended by the members of the staff as well as all the Research students of the Department can be occasionally organized which may discuss primarily questions pertaining to the methodology of research.

During the early stages of the research the candidates may be made to read certain outstanding books on the methodology of historical research. For example, Crump’s ‘History and Historical Research’, Garraghan’s ‘A Guide to Historical Method’, George’s ‘Historical Evidence’, Oman’s ‘On the writing of History’, Thompson’s ‘A History of Historical writing’ are some of the books which can be read with profit.

This brings us to the use of libraries. Several of our Universities have lending libraries. It is not always that students are able to refer to particular books at the needed time. Either Departmental libraries can be established where almost all the technical books would be made available or the entire library in an University can be reconstituted as only a Reference Library. The Madras Record Office, now called the 'Tamil Nādu Archives' is unique in its collection of rare manuscripts.

Facilities for researchers in the Record Offices of the States and the Centre can be improved in a large measure. In the first place, the Curator or the Head of the Record Office should be at once competent and sympathetic. He must be an officer, preferably one who has had a good record of research to his credit in History or allied subjects. At times Revenue Officers are appointed as Curators; they have little concern for or interest in research. Secondly, there ought to be proper facilities for guiding researchers, particularly in the matter of enabling them to obtain the suitable records for scrutiny with the least delay. Competent assistants can help the researchers in this matter considerably. The Oriental Manuscripts Library, attached to the University of Madras can be better organised to prove useful for researchers on the Early History of India.

The offices of the Government Departments of Archaeology, Epigraphy and Numismatics should provide help for those working on subjects in Early Indian History. In several States the inscriptions copied fifty or sixty years ago have not been published yet. The Government must undertake the speedy publication of these epigraphs. Meanwhile, facilities must be afforded for the consultation of unpublished inscriptions. Archaeological Societies, so called, must be real clearing houses of new data and not dens of communal intrigues.

### **Writing of the Thesis :**

After the matter has been collected with discrimination and care, and sifted and analysed, there comes the final task of presenting the matter in a cogent and readable manner. The guidance of the Supervisor is particularly needed in this matter. Confused thinking, verbiage, and exaggerations have to be carefully avoided<sup>6</sup>. It cannot be ignored that more often than not, a Thesis is estimated on the basis of the style and presentation of the matter.

In this connection we are faced with the question of the language in which the Theses in History are to be written. With the unfortunate deterioration in the standard of English of our University products on the one hand and with the increasing cry for the adoption of the regional language as the medium of higher education, on the other, the case for the adoption of the regional language for writing Theses seems to be strengthened. Moreover, with some, the question has become a matter of sentiment.

Despite these circumstances, I feel that our Research Theses must continue to be written in English, at least for some more time to come. It is my conviction that for securing accuracy of expression and well balanced presentation the continuance of English is essential. At present no Indian language is so well developed as to facilitate its employment in the writing of research Theses.

## N O T E S

1. R. C. Majumdar, while deplored the lack of historic spirit among the Hindus, exaggerates the historical merit of the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*. In fact, Kalhaṇa is guilty of believing in legends, as is evident from the early part of his work. As Sir A. Stein has shown, *Rājarataṅgiṇī* contains several exaggerations and improbabilities. For instance, Raṇāditya is said to have ruled for 300 years. A. K. Majumdar's attempted defence of Kalhaṇa in this regard is irrational.
2. Even though there are difficulties in achieving perfect objectivity, it is surprising that one N. Subramanian has gone to the extent of stating in his text book "Historiography", p. 106, "that the objective is not even desirable: it need not be aimed at!" Perhaps he wants history to be written with religious, communal, parochial and other chauvinistic motives. We have had enough of them; only they have to be called by some name other than 'history'. Or does he applaud misrepresentation of facts? See in the Preface to his *Saṅgam Polity*. R. Sathianathier says that 'his works relating to the earlier period entitle him to be called 'the historian of the Saṅgam Age'. This is subverted and now in his 'History of Tamil Nāḍu' Part II, his Publishers are allowed to misquote R. Sathianathier as having hailed him in the said Preface as the 'The Historian of the Tamils.' Moreover, he is stated to have 'presided over the Indian History Congress held at Aligarh in 1975'. What a travesty of facts! One can understand why he does not want objectivity, or perhaps even veracity for that matter.
3. 'Negative Chauvinism' consists of unduly praising certain languages, aspects of national character and cultures so as to draw a dark picture of others with whom they came into contact. See for example, the British imperialists like Lord Macaulay and Sir H. S. Cunningham stressing on the moral superiority of the British, or Indian nationalists like B. G. Tilak and A. C. Das over-rating the antiquity and greatness of the Vēdas, apparently in order to exalt their cultural heritage in comparison with that of the British or non-Tamils in decrying the glory of the Saṅgam works or the Tamil origin of Muruga worship and so on. Another type of 'Negative Chauvinism' is foreign jingoism which exalts the glories of another country. See for instance, Max Muller, the wellknown Orientalist, said in his lectures delivered at the University of Cambridge in 1882: "If I were to look over the whole world to find out the country most richly endowed with all the wealth, power

and beauty that nature can bestow—in some parts a very paradise on earth—I should point to India". This is verily in Oriental style! He continued: 'If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life and has found solutions of some of them which well deserve the attention of even of those who have studied Plato and Kant—I should point to India.' Though partially true, this sentence contains also an exaggeration.

Several decades later, the great thinker, Romain Rolland also made the following over-statement, when he said 'If there is one place on the face of the earth where all the dreams of living men have found a home from the very earliest days when man began the dream of existence, it is India'.

4. That there was a lack of historical spirit in India is pointed out by several writers including A. B. Keith, G. Buhler and C. H. Tawney. Some deny the validity of this verdict. P. K. Acharya, for instance, refers to inscriptions like those of Khāravela, Rudradāman, Samudragupta, of the Pālās and Sēnās and also of treatises like the Harshacharita and Kumārapālacharita. But the inscriptions pertaining to ancient India are just a few, considering the vastness of the country and the long period of time covered. The treatises like the Narasamsim or Harshacharita are pre-eminently eulogies, while the Jain chronicles are concerned only with the exaltation of their religion. The Vamsāvalis and Rājāvalis provide only lists of kings.
5. Some examples are V. A. Smith who worked on Indian History for over twenty years after official retirement, or C. P. Brown, H. E. Colebrooke and R. C. Dutt, all officials, who devoted their spare time to cultural pursuits. Among others, Gibbon, Mommsen, Ranke, R. G. Bhandarkar and Jadunath Sarkar are a few of those who worked with an unflinching zeal, actuated by the love of the subject.
6. Presentation is supremely important. In the first instance, the supervisors themselves must cultivate the art of presenting their facts in a veracious and direct as well as elegant manner avoiding scurrilous attacks on their compeers, exhibiting their petty rivalry or jealousy or exalting their pet heroes to the skies. Accuracy, to the extent possible, must be the sole aim. Verbal acrobatism must be relegated to other spheres. Truth should not be sacrificed to an epigram, as is done by several flippant writers of Indian history.

## II. Historical Heritage of the Tamils

“Most history is guessing, and the rest is prejudice” said Will and Ariel Durant in their well-known ‘The Story of Civilization’.<sup>1</sup> Developing the same idea further, these writers added that “the historian always oversimplifies and hastily selects a manageable minority of facts and faces out of a crowd of souls and events whose multitudinous complexity he can never quite embrace or comprehend.”<sup>2</sup>

Great as these writers were, their sweeping generalisation is unacceptable. Even in respect of the major part of medieval and modern history of countries like India much data have been collected and conclusions formulated. No doubt, there is still much that is unknown or indefinitely and incompletely known. But this, too, has to be explored by assiduous effort; we must remember that many facts unknown some decades ago have since been brought to light. It is important to remember that the progress of archaeology, sociology, linguistics and other studies has disclosed several new facts and ideas.

In respect of known facts deliberate perversion of truth actuated by chauvinism, prejudice and such other reprehensible factors must be cast aside. It is unwarranted to assume that at no time can we reconstruct the true history of many countries of the medieval and modern periods. But it calls for a sustained effort and a balanced outlook.

Equally important is the need for delving deep into the relatively unknown periods of the early history of the various countries. Regarding India, for instance, did we know any thing about the marvellous Indus Valley civilization before 1922? We

had known only about the Egyptian, Assyrian, Sumērian, Bābylōnian, Syrian and Chinese civilization, to mention some. But the discovery of the Indus Valley or Hārappan, as it is briefly known, culture has revolutionised the history of India and of the world. Thanks to the C-14 Test it has been taken to have flourished between 2500 and 1900 B.C. It is important to notice in this connection that very recent excavations in certain sites now in Pakistan throw new light on the extent, and more important, on the date of the Indus Valley civilisation. Excavations at Rehman Dheri, 14 miles north of Dera Ismail Khan city, have revealed the amazingly wide extent of the so-called Indus Valley civilization. There appears to have existed a cultural closeness between the northern part of Pakistan, Mundi Gak in Afghanistan, Hissar in Iran and even so far as Namaz Gah and other sites in Soviet Turkemania. Moreover, this discovery establishes the beginning of Rehman Dheri a few hundred years earlier than Mohenjodārō and Hārappa. The first major steps towards urbanisation on the Indus plain, as well as the initiation of a proto-literate society, are evident from the recovered material. The date of the rise of Rehman Dheri as a town associated with the Indus civilisation is reckoned by experts as about 3200 B.C.

Even more arresting is the fact that a factory site believed to have existed at Lewan in North Pakistan about 4000 B.C. connected with the Indus civilisation. The excavators have said that the Lewan factory was used for the manufacture of stone tools of different types, including querns, grinding stones, axes, hammers and ring stones.

It may be noted that the relics discovered at Rehman Dheri produced striking jewellery and pottery. Artisans there made beads of gold, lapis lazuli, carnelian, agate, jasper, turquoise, ivory and bone, terracotta and bone and ivory bangles. Cultivation of wheat and barley, chillies, mustard and wild oat seeds also seems to have been adopted. It is likely that the area was

irrigated by the Comal Tank-Zam River and by the Indus River, which apparently flowed nearer the site then. Thus Rehman Dheri, Lawan and the adjoining places were at once agricultural and industrial ; they witnessed a stage of transition from the rural to the urban setting.

Now there arises the question of the identification of the Hārappan script ; it continues to this day a baffling problem. Fr. Heras thought the language of the Hārappan inscriptions was Proto-Indian, Proto-Indo-Mediterranean or more specifically Proto-Dravidian, supposed to have been the parent of all the modern Dravidian languages of India.<sup>3</sup> This has been supported more recently by the Russian and Finnish experts, who, working independently, concluded that the language was Dravidian. Moreover, Iravadam Mahadevan has made an intensive study of the script and the words occurring in the Harappan inscriptions and thinks that they represent old Tamil. They are recorded in his “Corpus of Tamil-Brāhmī Inscriptions”, the product of an intensive study.

But as against these, Dr. S. R. Rao of the Archaeological Survey of India claims that the old Indus Valley script can be deciphered on the basis of its later development. He conducted excavations at Lothal, Rangpur, Rojdi and Prabhas and concluded that in those places the old Indus script has survived and undergone certain modifications between 1900 B.C. and 1500 B.C. The script had become simplified as found from the writing on the pottery in the post-Hārappan period similar to that in Lothal, Rojdi and Rangpur which had become simplified and disciplined into an alphabetic system of 21 letters, with only two vowels, of which one was rarely used. According to Dr. S. R. Rao, this late Hārappan script is identical with the north Semitic writings of the 18th to 12th centuries B.C. It is significant that vestiges of the late

Hārappan culture have been discovered recently in Āndhra Pradesh in painted pottery.

Another interesting fact stated by him is that he read nearly 85 inscriptions in Lothal, Rangpur and other places and from them he found the names of Rishis, Deities, Asuras and Demi-gods and also the names of ordinary individuals, of commodities, of planets and constellations. He added that the names of deities, which later came to be identified with Shiva, Vishnu and other deities were also found. Dr. Rao added that of the nearly 70 words read so far, at least 60 are traceable to the Indo-European group of languages. They showed the transition from the old Indo-Iranian to the Indo-Āryan (Vēdic) branches of the Indo-European group.

But he added that a small section of the Hārappan population spoke a language not of the Indo-Aryan group but, at the same time, not Dravidian. His contention was that "the phonology and structure of the Hārappan script so far deciphered did not suggest any appreciable connection with the Dravidic or so-called Proto - Dravidic group of languages." However, he thinks that the Indus population must have been cosmopolitan in character.<sup>4</sup>

While these are the two main lines of thought regarding the Indus people, several writers have yielded to wishful thinking and chauvinism one way or the other. Many are the Tamil chauvinists who assert that the Hārappans were the ancestors of the Tamils. They associate Tamil to have been derived from a language spoken by a group of early people like the Elamites and Hurrians who came from the West and settled in and near the Indus Valley. Several European archaeologists like Bork and G. W. Brown suggest the Elamite and the Hurrian connection with the Indus

inscriptions. It is hoped by some that the survival in Tamil of place and personal names which can be traced to Hurrians and Elamites leads us to suspect that some of them may turn up on the Indus Valley seals. The affinities between Elamite and the Dravidian languages have led Dyakonov, the Soviet historian, to assume that tribes related by language to the Elamites and the Dravidians were scattered throughout Iran in the 4th and 3rd millenia B.C. and perhaps later as well. T. B. Nayar shows how certain words in Tamil and Maṭṭayalam correspond to Hurrian words. He thinks that the name Porunan occurring in the Śaṅgam age has its parallel in the Hurrian Pur-hu-un-ni. Elini in Tamil corresponds to E-ez-ni-ia in the Hurrian language. But all these conjectures seem to be far-fetched. They do not indubitably prove the connection of the Tamils with those who had come and settled in the Indus Valley. More striking is the fact that I. Mahadevan has read several names from the earliest stratum of Tamil literature in the Indus seals. Particularly notable is that he reads the original name of Agastya (Akattiya) in one of the Indus Valley seals. It is well known that Agastya is the legendary originator of Tamil language. It is interesting that in Hurrian Akku-teia is a common personal name. It is made of two elements 'ak' meaning bring, guide, and teia representing a Hurrian deity. A Hurrian personal name Ari-Harpa is said to be connected with Ayyappa in Kannada and Malayalam.

Now the question is whether these examples indicate a connection between Hurrian and Dravidian as represented by Tamils.<sup>5</sup> These require further study. Among the pieces of evidence which suggest the Dravidian connection with the Indus culture the following may be mentioned. Firstly, the pottery of the Hārappan culture and that of the Tamil country in the megalithic period, particularly in Uraiyyūr, Tirukkāmpuliyūr and Koṛkai are similar. Secondly, ring wells were used

in both regions ; particularly in Kāñchipuram there are many ring wells buried in the river beds and on the banks of the Vēgāvati river. Thirdly, it has been recently announced by Dr. Sankalia, the well-known archaeologist, that one of the terracota dancing figures (3" h) from Hārappa bears resemblance to the South Indian Nātarāja of the Chōla period. But can this be taken to be anything more than a matter of chance ? Fourthly, among objects of worship there were among the Indus people lingas and yōnis. The yōnis were pierced with a cylindrical hole in the centre, and were either round or had a wavy outline. It is well known that the Rig Vēdic Āryans condemned the worshippers of the Linga. Again the Śiva Paśupati cult, believed to have existed among the Indus Valley people, was non-Āryan and probably Dravidian.

Moreover, unlike the Rig Vēdic Āryans the Indus people lived a highly organised urban life. Besides, among the skeletal remains recovered from Hārappa and Mohenjodārō, the Austrolōid is one pattern that shows affinity with skulls unearthed from the ancient cemetery of Ādichchanallūr in Tamil Nādu and with the Veddas of Śri Laṅka<sup>6</sup>.

In this connection an oft-repeated argument must be reiterated. The cow was held in veneration by the Rig Vēdic Āryans and the horse was also esteemed by them. On the other hand, neither the cow nor the horse appear in the Indus Valley sites, where the place of the cow is taken by the bull, while the horse finds no place whatever.

Perhaps one of the most important pieces of evidence of the Dravidian and particularly Tamil association with the Indus Valley culture is the presence of the people speaking the Brāhui language in Baluchistan. It is well known that the Brāhui is basically connected with Tamil. To imagine that Tamils from South India had proceeded to Baluchistan and beyond is to

think of an improbable hypothesis. Again, as noticed earlier, the Lycians of Asia Minor described themselves in their inscriptions as Tr̄im̄lai, a name which seems to have affinity with Dr̄amīla or Tamil. Moreover, it is notable that several ancient place names in Afghanistan, Iran and particularly in Mesopotamia like Īr, Yertūr and Nippūr have a Tamilian similarity.<sup>7</sup> Again, the discovery of twenty Dravidian words in the Rig Vēda by Prof. Burrow shows that prior to the Aryans portions of North India too must have been occupied by Dravidians.

In this connection attention may be called to the inferences drawn by R. Raghava Iyengar and M. Raghava Iyengar to tribes like the Vēlir and the Kōcar having migrated from the north to the region of Tamil Nādu. It is shown from Puṇam 201 that the Vēlir chief Irūṇkōvēl is described as having been descended through forty-nine generations from the Vēlir who emerged from the pitcher of a northern sage. This pitcher myth is associated with the history of the Chālukyas as well as with certain North Indian legends. It is significant that the jar is an important symbol in the Indus script. Can these facts help us formulate a connection of the Indus people with the Dravidians? Another popular legend is that Agastya, the accredited father of Tamil, led a migration of 18 kings descended from Lord Krishṇa to Potiyil in the extreme South. Dr. Nikita Gurove refers to the vibrant legends in ancient Tamil literature as well as in Telugu folklore about a distant motherland and suggests that they indicate a wave-like emigration of cultural groups of ancient Indus civilisation to the South.

The Kōcar are also believed to have come down from the north. The fact that they are known as Ilam Kōcar suggests, as I. Mahadevan points out, that Ilam may refer to Elam, the hilly region near Baluchistan. These facts gathered from the Śaṅgam literature reinforce the hypothesis of the connection of the Indus people with Elam on the one hand and the Tamils on the other.

Though this strengthens the hypotheses suggested earlier, a more convincing piece of evidence is needed to settle the question once and for all.

While on the one hand some of the suggestions made on the bases of verbal similarities, connecting the Indus civilisation with Tamil have yet to be proved, some writers have sought to indicate certain pieces of additional evidence in support of the Vēdic connection. T. N. Ramachandran claims to have discovered a similarity between the Indus Valley seals and the Rig Vēdic patterns of sacrifices.<sup>8</sup> He states: 'It would seem possible now to discover a remarkable correspondence that the scenes on the seals depict many events and scenes described in the various Rig Vēdic hymns themselves'. But he does not substantiate his hypothesis by specific evidence. He says again that the episodes narrated in the Rig Vēdic hymns are reflected in the Indus seals. Again, no convincing example is provided. He claims that anthropomorphic forms of gods like Agni are found on the seals. He adds that the 'description of Agni as surrounded by the seven Hotarah or other sacrificial members in a ritual as given in the hymns is virtually depicted to a detail on these seals'. This is nothing but a figment of the imagination. Again, he adds that the Great Bath in Mohenjodārō was constructed for the final purification of the performer of a sacrifice like the Asvamēda. This is fantastic. If anything, the Great Bath resembles the large tanks near South Indian temples. There is thus no convincing base for his association of the Rig Vēdic Aryans with the age-old Indus civilisation.

In fact the real identification of [the Indus script and its relation with a known language can be determined only if we get a bilingual inscription in the Indus script and another script which has been already identified. The situation is not so desperate even though the efforts have so far failed to discover such a bilingual inscription. There was a time when the

hieroglyphic writing in Ancient Egypt was not made out. But the problem was solved after the discovery of bilingual inscriptions engraved in hieroglyphic writing in which the figure of an object represented a word or syllable. It must be remembered that the Brāhmī script itself was deciphered only in 1837 by Prinsep. He was able to achieve this from bilingual coins of the Greek rulers of north western India, in which their names and titles were given both in Greek letters and in Prakrit in Brāhmī letters. Thus it is hazardous to make venturesome assertions about the relationship of the Indus Valley civilisation with either the Aryan or Dravidian civilisations though the probability alone may be indicated on the basis of the extant evidence. It cannot be too often repeated that neither wishful thinking nor chauvinism should handicap authentic history.

One form of chauvinism has led to the view that both the Aryans and Dravidians were natives of India and were not outsiders. This seems unacceptable for the simple reason that the Iranian and Sumerian elements noticeable respectively in the Aryan and Dravidian civilisations of old could not have appeared but for their having come from or through these respective regions.

### **Lemūrian theory :**

In this context a reference to the so-called Lemūrian theory is essential because it has relevance to the origin and antiquity of the Tamils. But a detailed consideration of the theory need not be undertaken here, since it has been examined at some length in my book on the Social History. It is well known that several Tamil scholars of old believed that there existed in the bygone ages an extensive mass of land connecting South India with Śrī Laṅka, Malaysia, Indonesia and other countries of South East Asia and Australia on the one hand and Madagascar and South Africa on the other. This view was vaguely stated by Tamil scholars and was described as the Lemūrian continent by certain

Western writers. Tamil scholars developed this theory on the basis of Nakkīrar's commentary to the Iraiyanār Ahapporuḷ, which commentary appeared only about the 9th century A.D. Recently some Tamil writers speak of it as Kumarikanḍam. Nakkīrar referred to it in connection with his description of the Tamil Śaṅgams. Certain references in Kalitthai and Śilappadi-kāram advert to the submergence of land to the south of Kumari. The commentators of the Tamil classics, like Adiyārkunallār and Nachchinārkiniyar who lived between the 12th and 14th centuries A.D. developed these views at considerable length.

According to the theory expounded by them, in that vast expanse of land there was Madurai, later known as Ten Madurai, which was the capital of the Pāṇḍyan king and the seat of the first Tamil Śaṅgam. Many details furnished about the Śaṅgam are probably incredible, though it might have been true that several Tamil works ascribed to the first Śaṅgam are lost. Old Madurai was engulfed by the sea after which the second Śaṅgam flourished in Kapāḍapuram. Several of the works produced by this Śaṅgam also are lost, except a fragment of Tolkāppiyam.

Another deluge devoured Kapāḍapuram and ultimately the Pāṇḍyan capital and the third Śaṅgam appeared in Madurai of the present day. There are many who believe that this was the real and only Śaṅgam or Tamil academy under the auspices of which all the extant Śaṅgam works were produced.

It may be held that the theory of three Tamil Śaṅgams is not a pure myth. In this connection it may be mentioned that there is a small island called Madurai very near the northern part of Jāva. There is also another island called Madurai near the coast of Bōrneō. The common people call them Marudai. But this is how the modern Madurai of South India is also called by the illiterate folk. One or the other of these might have been the seat of the first Tamil Śaṅgam. It is probable that the island near Jāva

was the Madurai associated with the Śāṅgam because, early mankind might have first appeared in Jāva, a fact suggested by the discovery of a skeleton of a creature resembling early man. Kapādapuram could well have been the seat of the second Śāṅgam. Its existence in the past is indicated by the references to it in the Epics, the Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata.

European scholars supported the Lemūrian theory on geological and geographical grounds. The genesis of the name Lemūria was found in the monkey-like animals, Lemūr, as they were called, which lived in that region. The name ‘Lemūria’ was first employed by an Englishman, Sclater, to this wide expanse of land.

There arises the question of the presence of the Negrito element among the aborigines of South India. Several ethnologists and anthropologists support this view and suggest association of South India with South Africa or South East Asia. The totems found among certain tribes of South India as well as the practice of using the boomerang by the Kallans of South India are found to exist among certain original inhabitants of Indonēsia and Pōlynēsia. Moreover, the languages spoken by the Maories in New Zealand and by people in the neighbouring islands are pronounced by experts to have affinity with Tamil.

On the other hand, affinities of certain backward classes with the Negros of South Africa have been stressed by certain recent researchers. Of course in respect of the black colour and flat nose there is some resemblance. But when it comes to a matter of the ‘straight hair’, ‘wavy hair’ or ‘curly hair’ the resemblance is by no means clear, though some European experts like Snowden Junior think there is not much difference.<sup>10</sup>

Some writers have felt that African negros had come and mixed with South Indians and that they constituted the ancestors of some of the Harijans in Kerala and Tamil Nādu. Geologists

have advanced a hypothesis that a great land bridge once connected India and Africa. Whether the Negroid element in South India is traceable to Africa or to Australia, is another difficult question. Probably they all formed inhabitants of one vast land mass. The Negroids of Africa in the West and Oceania in the East came to be separated by the expanses of the Indian Ocean. But this, too, is a piece of guess. It is not possible to be more specific about this difficult question, although some assert that the contact between South India and East Africa rather than South Africa is more probable. But the assertion made by L. S. Senghor that there was kinship between East Africans and Dravidians<sup>11</sup> seems to be wide of the mark. Lilian Hamburger held that there is a kingship between Kannada and the Bantu languages<sup>12</sup>. Alfredo Trombetti went to the extent of suggesting that Dravidian and Negro-African languages represented a common language, akin to Sumerian.<sup>13</sup> This too seems to be a sweeping generalisation.

The only reasonable conclusion is that there are some probabilities in respect of the Lemūrian theory and Negroid element in South Indian population. It is not possible to assert as to how far they are true. Further advances in archaeology, ethnography, anthropology and other sciences alone can settle these riddles.

In the present state of our knowledge the possible conclusions are that the Dravidians came from Sumeria through Elam, settled in North India and established the Indus Valley civilization. Their language was in all probability akin to the language, later developed as Tamil. As a consequence of repeated deluges the people of the Indus Valley moved south and east and some of them ultimately reached South India and settled in modern Canarese, Telugu, Tamil and Malayalam regions.

In this distant past there must have existed a few places in South East Asia, where some of the ancestors of the Tamils lived. These people might have developed the Tamil language and established in due course the Tamil Sangams. These hypotheses alone can explain the early history of Tamil in Ten Madurai, Kapādapuram and Vaḍa Madurai. Perhaps some of the early Tamils had travelled westwards by the ocean and settled in Baluchistan, Elam and the Indus Valley. These postulates provide a plausible relationship between Tamil words and those found in the Elamite and the Hurrian languages. At a later stage people from Sumeria and other regions of Western Asia might have immigrated into the Indus Valley and mixed with the earlier immigrants.

Still earlier, certain people of the Negroid stock either from South East Asia or from Africa might have come and settled in South India. It is not unlikely that some of them are the ancestors of the Negroids in Tamil Nādu and other regions of South India. Up to a certain measure we have to agree with the castigations of History of Will and Ariel Durant indicated in the opening para of this paper. There are palpable guesses and over-simplifications.

But it is important to urge that these pessimistic writers themselves admit in another part of their work the historicity of the Indus civilisation. They state moreover that “between the heyday of Mohenjōdārō and the advent of the Āryans a great gap stands in our knowledge or rather that our knowledge of the past is an occasional gap in our ignorance”.<sup>14</sup> Refreshingly they add a more positive conclusion. “The Dravidians were already a civilised people when the Āryans broke down upon them; their adventurous merchants sailed the sea even to Sumeria and Babylon; and their cities knew many refinements and luxuries. It was from them apparently that the Aryans took their village community and their system of land tenure and

taxation. To this day the Deccan is still essentially Dravidian in stock and customs, in language, literature and arts".<sup>15</sup> But unfortunately one is constrained to add that there are still uncertainties and contradictions in the conclusions advanced by these learned critics. The gaps have to be filled and the ultimate truths have to be arrived at only after further investigation. As mentioned earlier, the situation is not desperate. Geologists, geographers, sociologists, anthropologists, linguists and historians must all work in collaboration in order to arrive at the truth.

## N O T E S

1. The Story of Civilization, Chapter I, p. 12.
2. Ibid., P. 979.
3. Certain writers have ascribed to Fr. Heras the conclusion that the ancient inhabitants of the Indus spoke the Tamil language. He protests indignantly against this erroneous interpretation. However, he shows that the original name of the Proto-Indo-Mediterranean was 'Tramilar' which was later transformed into 'Tamilar' in India.
4. These details are gathered from the address delivered by Dr. S. R. Rao in the Museum Society of Bombay on June 14, 1971. Dr. Rao is at present working on the Indus script as a Nehru scholar.
5. We leave out the consideration of Lahōvāry's fantastic theory that the civilisation which flourished once in the region beginning from Iberia in Spain down to India were all connected with each other in respect of religious rites and customs. His theory was based on the study of linguistic affinities but other similarities like ethnological and anthropological features do not support his theory.
6. Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures, Year 1976, July—December, pp. 155—6.
7. See the author's A Social History of the Tamils, Vol. I, p. 51/F.N.
8. Transactions of the Archaeological Society of South India, 1957—8, pp. 47—54.
9. Slightly different in area is the Gondwanaland which comprised South America and Antarctica also.
10. Snowden, Jr. : Blacks in Antiquity, Harward University Press, 1970. Some photographs show that certain primitive inhabitants in Kerala had almost a similar kind of hair like the Negros of Africa.
11. K. P. Aravanan: Dravidians and Africans, Ed. 1977. P. 4.
12. Ibid, P. 12.
13. Ibid, P. 10.
14. Will and Ariel Durant: The Story of Civilisation, Vol. I, p. 396.
15. Ibid.

### III. Āryan influence in Tamilaham during the Śāngam Epoch

There is a considerable measure of uncertainty regarding the date of the Āryan advent into Tamilaham. None of the Śāngam works indicate when the Āryans entered Tamilaham. Certain writers have held that, not long after the Vēdic period, there occurred a mass migration of Āryans to the Deccan and South India including Tamil Nādu and still farther eastwards into the different countries of South-east Asia. Another facile generalisation advanced regarding the migration of the Āryans is that round about 1000 B.C. they moved southwards reaching even the Tamil country. But this is hardly justified by the known data.

There is a tradition recorded in the Aitarēya Brāhmaṇa that Viśvāmitra condemned his fifty sons to live in the southern borders of Āryavarta. These sons of Viśvāmitra are supposed to have been descendants of Dasyus and it is believed that later on they became the ancestors of the Āndhras, Pundras, Sabaras and Pulindas.<sup>1</sup> Assuming that the Brāhmaṇas might be dated to about 1000 B.C.. it is to be remembered that there is no mention of the Tamils in this list.

Certain writers like the late P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar were inclined to treat a reference to Chērapādah occurring in Taitriya Āraṇyaka as a reference to the Chēra kings of the South. But Sayana, the commentator of this Āraṇyaka, has interpreted Chēra to mean snake in that context. The known history of the Chēra kingdom does not warrant such an early antiquity for

it. Nor do the references occurring in the epics of the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa to Tamil Nādu constitute reliable indications of very early Āryan contact.

In fact, it has to be observed that Pāṇini who is believed to have lived about the sixth century B. C. does not mention the kingdoms in the extreme south. He mentions only the Kalingas among the people of South India. Apparently, by his time the Āryans had little knowledge of the other kingdoms farther south. On the other hand, Kātyāyana, the grammarian of the 4th century B.C., specifies the Chōla kingdom. This is to the best of our knowledge, the earliest reference to the extreme south.<sup>2</sup> It is not too much to presume that it was only about the 4th century B.C., that the Aryan contact with the Tamil country could have begun. It is significant to remember in this connection that the Manu, who gave a real shape to the laws of the Hindus, considered the Vindhya range as marking the southern limit of Āryavarta and the land farther to the south as a condemned region.<sup>3</sup>

The question arises as to who came first to the Tamil country, the Hindus, Jains or Buddhists. The common view held is that the Hindus were the earliest colonists. But a re-examination of the question suggests that the other possibility is equally worthy of consideration. In the first place, Vijaya, the first king according to the Sinhalese Chronicles and the accredited leader of the Āryan immigrants into Śrī Laṅka, is assignable to the 5th century B.C., though tradition makes him a contemporary of the Buddha. It stands to reason that the Buddhists would have come to Śrī Laṅka not much earlier than the time when they migrated to South India. Whether the Āryans went to Śrī Laṅka entirely by the sea route or by land to South India first and thence moved on to Śrī Laṅka, the Buddhists who were imbued by the missionary zeal would not have failed to come into contact with South India at the earliest

opportunity. In any case, sometime between the 5th and 4th centuries B.C., Buddhists, and in all probability, the Jains, too, came to the Tamil country in South India.

The view is supported by the Brāhmī inscriptions of Madurai, Tirunelveli and Sri Lanka. There have appeared differences of views regarding the date of these inscriptions ; some epigraphists assign them to the 3rd century B.C., and others to the second and first centuries B.C. Palaeography is the principal basis of these deductions : and it is well known that it is not far too dependable a source for determining chronology within a narrow range of time. The view of K. V. Subramania Aiyar that some of the inscriptions are assignable to the 3rd century B.C. seems to be still valid, though some of the recent epigraphists are inclined to date even the oldest among them to the 2nd century B.C. However, generally speaking, the Brāhmī inscriptions of South India also support the suggestion that from about 4th century B.C., the Jains and Buddhists had begun to come and settle down in Southern India, and that in all probability they preceded the Hindu Aryans,

It is important to remember that the Hindu Aryans did not all migrate to South India at one stretch. The epigraphic evidence as well as the names of groups of brāhmins who were settled at different stages in different places prove this. The designations of groups like ‘Nārpetteṇṇāyiravar’ and ‘Eṇunūṛruvar’ clearly suggest that waves of immigrants came into the Tamil country. Perhaps the village, Eṇṇāyiram which literally translates the Sanskrit word *ashtasahasram* (eight thousand) may be one of the places where the community had settled. It is found that now the name survives in a large number of villages where smārta Brāhmins live in the Tamil country. Some have suggested that Eṇṇāyiram was the original name and that later it was sanskritised into ‘Ashtasahasram.’ The probability seems to have

been the reverse of this suggestion. The section of brāhmaṇins in the Tamil country known as Vadamas obviously consists of those who came from the north; they claim themselves to be pure in descent from the Āryans. Some of the Śaṅgam poets had names like ‘Vadamodankilār’, ‘Vadama Vanṇakkan Dāmōdaranār’ and Vadaman Vanṇakkam Pērisāttan’; these indicate that these poets belonged to groups which had hailed from the north.

There is no doubt that a considerable number of Āryans, particularly of the Brāhmaṇ caste had come into the Tamil country some centuries prior to the Śaṅgam age, which is believed to have ranged roughly between the 1st and 3rd centuries A.D. The question arises as to whether brāhmaṇins alone among the Āryans migrated to the South. Though brāhmaṇins were the leaders of the immigrants, there is a great probability that others also accompanied them from the north. The Kshatriyas, as warriors, the Vaiśyas as traders and businessmen, as well as the Śūdras might have joined them. Ahanānūru (279) shows that the Āryans were engaged in taming elephants; it is interesting to learn<sup>4</sup> that elephants themselves were taught and trained through the medium of the Āryan language. Moreover, mention is made of the Āryan dancers of the KalaiKKūṭtam dance accompanied by drums and rope dancers.<sup>5</sup> All these indicate that there were Āryan Śūdras, too, in the Tamil country of the Śaṅgam age.

A more intriguing question is whether all the brāhmaṇins of Tamilaham during the Śaṅgam epoch were immigrants from the north. Did the Āryan brāhmaṇins keep themselves aloof from the higher section of the indigenous people in south or did they absorb some of them into their fold? We find certain pieces of evidence pertaining to the Śaṅgam epoch and the succeeding ages which suggest that there appeared a gradual process of

amalgamation. The designation ‘Vadama’ applied to a group only among the brāhmīns shows that there were others, indigenous to the Tamil country, who became transformed into brāhmīns.

In this connection, it is well worth noticing the occurrence of terms like ‘Mēlōr’, ‘Uyarndōr’ and ‘Arivar’ which occur in Tolkāppiyam, the celebrated grammar. The term ‘Mēlōr’ seems to have specified all persons of high character. From Karpiyal 3, Tolkāppiyam, it would appear that it included the first three classes under this designation. There is a slight difference in the denotation of the term as interpreted by the commentators of Tolkāppiyam. Ilampūraṇar interpreted ‘Mēlōr’ as the dēvās or celestial beings. Nachchinārkkiniyār provides a very wide interpretation to the term. He states that the norms of conduct prescribed for Vanigar or traders in respect of earning wealth is applicable to brāhmīns (antaṇar), araśar (kings) and all those comprised under Vēlālar. According to him, therefore, ‘Mēlōr’ denoted those members who followed a high standard of conduct. If that were so, it is a notably democratic conception. References in Tolkāppiyam (Tol. Karpiyal 3) and Puranānūru (183) show that ‘Mēlōr’ or men of character could be members of the the higher castes.

Equally wide was the denotation of the term ‘Uyarndōr’. Ilampūraṇar, the commentator of Tolkāppiyam, takes in respect of Sutra No. 27, Uyarndōr to mean Antaṇar and Araśar. But, while commenting on the two succeeding sūtras he takes Uyarndōr to mean brāhmīns as well as traders. Pērāśiriyar, another commentator, holds the term Uyarndōr to include brāhmīns as well as other learned persons. Thus ‘Uyarndōr’ seems to have denoted persons of deep learning and high character. Apparently, in a general sense it comprehended saints, kings, heroes, and brāhmīns. Used in a specific sense, it denoted also worthy individuals in the three higher groups of the social strata.

As regards the ‘Arīvar’ the interpretations suggested are illuminating. Tolkāppiyar does not identify Pārppār (brāhmins) exclusively with Arīvar. Pērāśiriyar states that ‘Arīvar’ are persons gifted with deep foresight and in this respect he likens them to brāhmins, but does not speak of them in identical terms. It is only the Divākaram which equates the term with ‘Pārppar;’ but the basis for this interpretation is not clear. Thus Arīvar in the original sense, used by Tolkāppiyar, applied to learned men among the people. No exclusive reference to caste or community is implied by the term. This suggests that a certain measure of fluidity existed in the caste system in respect of the Arīvar. Perhaps some of the learned Tamils of the indigenous stock were absorbed into the fold of brāhmins. One instance pertaining to the 4th century A.D. is known to us, when for the purpose of conducting sacrifices, certain members of the non-brāhmin communities were selected for want of the required number of brāhmins. In one of the accounts concerning brāhmins, it is stated that during the time of Mayūraśarman of the Kadāmba dynasty, some Āndhra brāhmins selected a number of families from the non-brāhmin castes, converted them into brāhmins and chose exogamous sept names for them. The fact that some brāhmins were described as belonging to the ‘Vadamas’ and ‘Brihacharaṇam’ shows that others were indigenous. In this connection it is relevant to consider the genesis of the people in Tamil Nādu known variously as ‘Ādi Śaivas’ or ‘Śivāchāryas’ or still later as ‘Ōtuvār.’ In respect of customs and manners they imitate the brāhmins. Some of them wear the sacred thread. They have been the officiating priests in the Śaiva temples, while quite a few of them continue to be priests in the shrines like those of Kāli, Amman and Mādan, which are all of pre-Āryan origin. It is probable that some non-brāhmins had become

merged with brāhmins. On the other hand, brahmins who continue as priests in Śiva temples, are considered as inferior to other brahmins. Does this imply that the Śiva deity was of non-Āryan origin? In any case these trends suggest that there was a certain measure of fusion among the Āryan and non-Āryan priestly classes.

Not only that. In the early periods of the immigration of the Āryans it would seem that the caste system was not very rigid. At any rate, instances of brāhmins having married from other communities are mentioned. Rāvaṇa, Vāli, Sugrīva, Mārīcha, Subahu, Khāra and others are stated to have been children of non-Āryan mothers born of Āryan fathers. Whether or not they were all historical personages or whether all the incidents associated with them are true or not, the traditions regarding their origin suggest that such marriages were not uncommon in the early stages.

It was no doubt in the sphere of religion that the Āryan ideas and practices seem to have influenced prominently the new set-up in Tamilaham. The Āryan brāhmins must have been imbued by a certain measure of missionary zeal in their migration to the south, and consequently they were eager to introduce their religious ideas and institutions among the people of their new settlements. They appear to have first worked up their way to royal favour; and, even during the Saṅgam epoch, several ministers and poets belonged to the Brāhmin caste. They were held in high esteem by kings and chieftains. Verses in Puṇanānūru and Padiruppattu state that it was incumbent even on kings to bow down to brāhmins in respect. This high position accorded to them paved the way for their ascendancy and widespread influence among the people of Tamil Nādu as in the rest of South India.

Brāhmaṇins in the royal courts induced their patrons to perform yāgās or holy sacrifices. Paṭṭinappālai, Padirūppattu and Kalittogai, for instance, refer to great yāgās which were conducted on a large scale. The names of kings like ‘Palyāga Mudukudumi Peruvaluti’ and ‘Irāyasūyam Vēṭṭa Perunarkkili’ provide testimony to the enthusiasm of kings in the performances of sacred sacrifices.

Bestowing gifts on brahmins was held to be a meritorious act of beneficence. Tolkaṇṇiyar had declared that giving gifts to brāhmaṇins was akin to the performance of sacrifices.

The Vēdic lore got currency even during the Śaṅgam epoch. The Vēdas were described in Tamil as ‘Maṇai’, ‘Kēlvi’, ‘Vāi Moli’, ‘Mudu Moli’, and ‘Yeludākkarppu.’ ‘Andaṇālar Nānmaṇai’ and ‘Arumaṇai’ were other honorific designations of the Vēdas. Specific details regarding the sacrifices like the kind of posts to be erected on occasions of the Yāgās, the special dress to be worn by the persons engaged in performing the rituals and ceremonies connected with the sacrifices<sup>7</sup> are indicated in the Śaṅgam works. The Paripāḍal states that Viṣhṇu emerges from the sacrificial fire.

It is significant that the deities figuring prominently in the Vēdas find a more or less equal position in the Śaṅgam works as well. Indra, for instance, is the lord of the celestial gods. In the Śaṅgam age, festivals in honour of Indra were held in the affluent towns and villages.<sup>8</sup> The sacred Mount Mēru of the North finds its echo in the Śaṅgam classics.<sup>9</sup> Tolkaṇṇiyam and Paripāḍal accord the primary place to Viṣhṇu. All the other gods, Asurās, the Sun and the Moon as well as the natural elements and the five Bhūtas are all believed to have emerged from Viṣhṇu. The

four-faced Brahmā who is entrusted with the creation of the world appears from the navel of Vishṇu.<sup>10</sup> Kāma and Sōma are also like Brahmā, the sons of Vishṇu. Garuḍa is the vehicle as well as the banner of Lord Vishṇu, while Ādiśēsha, the serpent god, serves as his couch.<sup>11</sup> The various incarnations of Vishṇu are mentioned in the Saṅgam classics.

Muruga is the nephew of Vishṇu and the son of Śiva and Pārvati. He is the god of Kurīñchi and is held in great veneration, particularly by the Kuravas. Besides undoubtedly the Tirumurugār̄uppaḍai and Paripāḍal, other classics like Puṣanānūṛū,<sup>12</sup> Narrinai<sup>13</sup> and Kuruntogai<sup>14</sup> refer to Muruga. Indra is said to appoint Muruga as the general of the Dēvas in encountering the opposition of the Asuras headed by Śūra. Muruga's exploits and ultimate triumph over Śūra are described. Among the places sacred to Muruga, Tirupparuṇkunṭam and Tiruchchīralaivāi find special mention.

Whether Muruga was an indigenous deity of the Tamils or not has been a subject of controversy. Skanda, Subrahmaṇia and Kārtikēya are names of the same deity occurring in the holy books of the Āryas.<sup>15</sup> But there is no place for this deity in the Vēdas. Everything considered, there is a great probability that Muruga was a popular deity of the Dravidian Tamils and was absorbed into the pantheon by the Āryas.<sup>16</sup> There is also justification to hold that Śiva, the 'Mukkaṭchelvan' of Puṣanānūṛū, also comes under the same category.

Apart from this, there were several deities of the early Tamils who were not eclipsed. They continue to be worshipped alongside with the Āryan deities; frequently they were assimilated into the existing fold. Thus Korraivai, mentioned for instance in Ahanānūṛū (345:4), as Kān Amar Chelvi and in Kalittogai (89:8) as Peruṇkattukkorri gets identified with Pārvati as the consort of Śiva. She, too, has three eyes

and the trident. The attributes associated with Korravai are distinctly of the indigenous pattern, and like Śiva and Murugan she must have been absorbed in the later Hindu pantheon.

Besides, a huge host of other deities was known to the Tamils long before their contact with the Āryans. In respect of most of these deities there was a common belief that, if they were not worshipped, harm would befall the people. Some deities were supposed to reside in hills and trees as well as in rivers and tanks. Demons and demonesses were particularly believed to live in these places.

The practice of erecting hero-stones and worshipping them was common among the Tamils of old. Images of gods and goddesses were erected in the junction of lanes and streets. Further, in the common meeting place, called the Podiyil, they used to erect a piece of wood and worship it;<sup>17</sup> on the walls of Podiyil they maintained painted images of deities. All these are indications that there was a curious blending of the Āryan and non-Āryan practices in religion. But it must be remembered that the fusion did not permeate the entire society in a uniform manner. The Āryan pattern, with but a few accretions, remained with the brāhmaṇins and the higher sections of the non-brāhmaṇins, while the people in the lower rungs stuck mainly to the older indigenous ways, absorbing occasionally the new practices. Festivals were celebrated in honour of the Āryan deities as well as for the rest. There were, for instance, the ‘Indra Vilā’, ‘Kārtikai Vilā’, ‘Ōṇa Vilā’ and numerous other festivities connected with the smaller village gods.

In respect of social life, too, a certain measure of absorption of the northern customs and habits was found. It has been frequently discussed how far the Āryan institution

of caste based on Varṇa or colour had penetrated Tamilaham of the Śāngam Age. Clearly the distinction dependent on Varṇa had appeared. The Tolkāppiyam and Puranānūru speak of the four-fold division. But two considerations differentiate the Tamilian pattern from the corresponding social structure in the north. In the first place, there is little evidence of the Kshatriya caste as such in Tamilaham; the Chēra, Chōla and Pāṇḍya kings, not to speak of the numerous chieftains were really Śūdras. Secondly, there existed numerous subdivisions like Pāṇan, Tudiyan, Parayan, Pulayan, Mallan, Kūttan and Kadamban among the Śūdras, purely based on occupation. It would seem, therefore, that in respect of the caste system, too, there was fusion of the Āryan and non-Āryan systems. Prior to the advent of the Āryans, there could have emerged a social division based on occupation, which, in its turn, was determined by the topographical divisions like the Kurīñchi, Mullai, Marudam, Neydal and Pālai.

The brāhmaṇins had begun to live as an exclusive group. They lived in separate streets. Kuruntogai<sup>18</sup> and Perumpāṇāṛgruppādai,<sup>19</sup> for instance, speak of the streets where brāhmaṇins alone lived. Sīrupāṇāṛgruppādai refers to an essentially brāhmaṇin village, Āmūr, in Oymānādu.<sup>20</sup> They kept their streets and houses clean. They bathed early in the morning and offered worship. But there were some who took to occupations other than religious. References to these ‘Vēṭappāppār’, otherwise spoken of as ‘Ūrppārppār’ and to those who earned their living by cutting conch shells are found.<sup>21</sup> From Padigruppattu<sup>22</sup> it is learnt that some brāhmaṇins had become skilled artisans, capable of making fine ornaments. The commentator of Padigruppattu points out that the able craftsman mentioned in the verse was also well-versed in the art of conducting the Yajña. This indicates that a certain measure of fluidity in the choice of occupations prevailed.

There is little doubt that the Āryan brāhmaṇins commanded high respect and social influence in Tamilaham even in the Śaṅgam age.<sup>23</sup> This was by virtue of their influence in the royal courts, their association with temples and worship and also their lofty ideals of conduct. It was essentially on account of the royal patronage that they were ensured special protection during occasions of political hostilities.

Though they were in several respects a privileged people, the Āryan brāhmaṇins and other immigrants borrowed several customs of the Dravidians, among which may be mentioned the institution of tali-tying which symbolised marriage, the boring of the nose and presenting to the bride the new sari called ‘Kūrai’ by the bridegroom’s party before marriage. There was, therefore, a certain measure of admixture in the religious and social set up. But it would by no means be easy to determine the exact proportion of the Aryan and non-Āryan elements in the admixture.

The consideration of the Āryan influence in respect of language is interesting. Brāhmaṇins took to Tamil, the native language, alongside with Sanskrit. The result was the entry of Sanskrit words into the parlance and vocabulary of the Tamil language. In respect of the earliest Śaṅgam poems the influence of Sanskrit was practically negligible. But there appeared a gradual increase in the compositions known as the Padinenkilkāṇakku in which the proportion of Sanskrit words became conspicuous. It is, however, remarkable that several brāhmaṇins became Tamil poets; some like Paraṇar and Kapilar were the most outstanding among them. Certain scholars have estimated that the brahmin poets constituted about one-tenth of the total number of Tamil poets of the Śaṅgam epoch. Perhaps, the percentage was higher for, in several cases the caste to which the poet belonged is difficult to be ascertained. However, it is interesting to finp

that the brāhmin poets of Tamil took to the language with remarkable enthusiasm. How they relished the indigenous language and its beauties is gathered, for instance, from the fact that ‘*Kuriñjippāṭṭu*’ was composed by the brāhmin poet, Kapilar, in order to reveal the sweet charm of Tamil to the Āryan king Brihadatta. This shows the antiquity of Tamil in Tamil Nādu.

By way of conclusion it may be stated that the Tamils of the pre-Āryan age had their own pattern of religious and social institutions, language and literature. But to assert that the pre-Āryan Tamils had ‘a rather primitive and poorish culture’,<sup>24</sup> is an understatement. Bishop Caldwell, who wrote at a time when all the Śaṅgam classics had not been brought to light, states that ‘the Dravidians, properly so called, had acquired at least the elements of civilisation, prior to the arrival amongst them of the brāhmīns’.<sup>25</sup> The Śaṅgam classics have not only strengthened the force of his observation but have shown that the Tamils of the age had developed their own civilisation in a remarkable measure. Prof. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, who was inclined to exaggerate the influence of Āryanisation of early Tamil country and its language, was constrained to admit later that in the farther south including Tamilaham the Āryans ‘were not able to incorporate them (the local inhabitants) into their own society and to root out their languages and their peculiar civilization’<sup>26</sup> No one denies that the infiltration of Āryan influence and of the Sanskrit language penetrated Tamilaham gradually, particularly in the post-Śaṅgam age. But to admit that is not to accept the sweeping statements made by the above-mentioned writer who ought to know better about the Śaṅgam epoch.

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## N O T E S

1. Aitarēya Brāhmaṇa, VII, 18.
2. Kātyāyana himself is believed to have been a brāhmin of South India.
3. The early Āryans are said to have held the Vindhya mountains as marking the limit of travelling, for the region to the south of the Vindhya was known as ‘Pariyātra’. It is also said that the Āryans came to identify the South with death and called it Yamyādik or Yamadik, i. e. that which points to the abode of death. Probably this was because the early immigrants were fiercely resisted by the original inhabitants.
4. Mullaippāṭṭu 31—37: Malaipāḍukadām 326—27.
5. Kuṭuntogai, 7: 3—5.
6. Thurston: *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Introduction, pp. 45—46. It is surprising that Prof. K. A. N. Sastri has said little about the distinction between the Vaḍamas and other brāhmīns. Though inclined in general to underestimate the importance of the pre-Āryan culture, as will be shown in the sequel, he adopts a slightly different attitude in his ‘Cōḷas’ (1975) p. 63, where he says that the striking feature of the culture of the Sāṅgam age is its composite quality.
7. Puṭanānūṭu, 15 and 166.
8. Aiṅkuṛunūṭu, 62: 1.
9. Perumpāṇṭīrappadai, 429, and Paripāḍal, 9: 13.
10. Kalittogai, 2: 1.
11. Perumpāṇṭīrappadai, 371—373
12. Puṭanānūṭu, 55: 19.
13. Nagṛipai, 288: 10.
14. Kuṭuntogai, 1: 3.
15. In the Taittiriya Āraṇyaka, among the Gāyatri mantras of many deities, Shaṅmukha is mentioned. In the Chhandōgya Upanishad Sanatkumāra, a great teacher of liberation, is identified with Skanda. But these are all later than the date of the Ādichchanaallūr finds and of the relics in western Asia.

16. K. A. N. Sastri tried to formulate a view that ‘Muruga’ is derived from the Persian name ‘Murgh’. This is unacceptable. Equally so is the view that ‘Muruga’ is derived from the African deity ‘Murungu’ ‘Dravidans and Africans’ by K. P. Aravanam p. 48. Another essay in this collection deals with this question.
17. Paṭṭinappālai, 246—49.
18. Kuṇuntogai, 277.
19. Perumpāṇāṛguppādai, 30.
20. Sirupāṇāṛguppādai, 187—88.
21. Ahanānūru, 24 : 1—3.
22. Padiguppattu, 74 : 10—14.
23. Padiguppattu, 24 : 6—8.
24. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri: ‘The Culture and History of the Tamils’ 1963, p. 7. Clearly unwarranted is his statement (“Hindu” dated 17-4-1960) that “We do not possess a single line of Tamil literature demonstrably antedating the contact between the pre-Āryan Tamil and Āryan Sanskrit culture.” What is the implication of this dogmatic and incorrect statement? Later in the book cited above on p. 129, Prof. K. A. N. Sastri himself states that the proportion of Sanskrit words is rather small in their (Sangam poems) vocabulary. Earlier in this paper itself I have stated that in respect of the earliest Śaṅgam poems, the influence of Sanskrit was practically negligible. See Puranānuru verse 1 for example which provides an idea of the purity and antiquity of ancient Tamil.
25. Bishop Caldwell: “Dravidian Comparative Grammar” (1956) p. 113.
26. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri: “A History of South India” (1966), p. 74. It is no chauvinism to state that among all the languages of the world none has had such a clear division into ‘Iyai’, ‘Is’ai’ & ‘Nāḍakam’. Prof. Sastri must have been aware of this.

## IV. Origin of Muruga Worship

It is well known that Muruga was the favourite deity of the Tamils for ages. Apart from the numerous references to Murugan, Vēlan and Korgavai Chelvan in the Śaṅgam classics, a far earlier evidence is seen from the urn burials excavated in Ādichchanallūr. The excavations have brought to light the Kāviḍi (a wooden frame with either Muruga's image or the lance, his favourite weapon, at the centre), iron banner base and representations of fowls in bronze and the gold mouth-pieces which were used for covering the mouth of the person who carried the Kāviḍi in order to maintain purity. The mouth-pieces have some geometrical designs carved on them. A few of the mouth-pieces have holes cut at the ends. Archaeologists believe that the Ādichchanallūr urn burials are not earlier than the 1st millenium B. C. It is older than the other megalithic sites found in Chingleput, South Arcot and other places in South India assigned to a period ranging from 700 B. C. to 400 B. C.

Surprisingly certain relics similar to those of the Ādichchanallūr finds have been discovered outside India. Mouth-pieces and Vēl and other relics of Muruga worship have been found at Enkōmi in Cyprus in tombs of the late bronze age. Further, two more or less similar sites are found in Palestine; one at Gaza has besides similar relics of Muruga worship, presents gold fillets or hand-bands, and archaeologists have assigned them to about 2000 B. C. In the other site at Gerar relics to those similar of Ādichchanallūr have been found and these are assigned to about 1200 B. C.

How did this resemblance between the Ādichchanallūr relics and those in Cyprus and Palestine appear? Most

probably the ideas of Muruga must have been taken by Tamil traders to Western Asia. It is not likely that they were imported from Western Asia to India or Tamil Nādu. Should this suggestion be held valid, Muruga worship must have originally appeared in Tamil Nādu before 2000 B. C.

In this connection it is relevant to note the views of the late Professor Nilakanta Sastri. Professor Sastri in his lecture on Murugan at a meeting of the Archaeological Society of South India, on 22-9-1964, said that Muruga may be an Āryan God for the following reasons:

- (1) Taitirēya Āranyaka and the Upanishads and later Sanskrit literature contain references to Subrahmaṇya who has been identified with Muruga.
- (2) The name of the cock is Murgh in old Persian and Muruk in Zend. Hence one is tempted to associate the word with the name Muruga who as a child hugs and plays with the cock as the Mahābhārata says.

Prof. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri concludes his talk by saying, “Such data and *others not mentioned here* seem to show that the Skanda Muruga cycle is no exception to the general rule of Āryan religion and deities being Tamilised, of the mingling of the Great Tradition with the Little”.

Now let us try to find out how far the statements of the learned Professor stand to test.

I. Sanskrit scholars fix the age of the Taitirēya Āranyaka roughly about the 3rd century B.C. The age of the Epics may roughly be placed between 300 B. C. and A. D. 300.

If Muruga was a God worshipped by the Āryans, his worship must have been mentioned in the Rig Vēda itself. “In Vēdic times, the worship of Subrahmaṇya was unknown;

on the other hand, the name appears in the Taitirēya Āranyaka Prasana 1, Anuvaka 12, v. 58. There Agni and Vāyu are spoken of as the servants or attendants of Indra, called by the name Subrahmaṇya. We do not have any hymns addressed to him. But in the period of the Epics, we have allusions to the birth of Kārtikēya or Subrahmaṇya. He is spoken of as the son of Rudra or Agni. The Southerners were influenced by this apparently widespread movement, and identifying their own old deity Muruga with Subrahmaṇya, regarded Him as equal to Indra and Varuṇa.”<sup>1</sup>

Tolkāppiyam, the ancient Tamil Grammar, precedes the Eṭṭutogai and the Pattuppattu. It contains no traces of Jainism and Buddhism and hence it might have been composed either in the 4th century B.C. or prior to it. In Sutra 2 of the Tolkāppiyam-Poruḍadhikāram, Sēyōn (Red God) is mentioned as the God of the hilly region. Subrahmaṇya was never a God of the Mountains in the North.

“The undoubted antiquity of the cult of Muruga among the Tamil is attested by the discovery at the historic urn-field at Ādichchanallūr of bronze cocks, iron spears and mouth-pieces of gold leaf similar to those employed by modern worshippers of Muruga when they are on a pilgrimage carrying a Kāvadi in fulfilment of a vow.”<sup>2</sup> Similar cocks, spears and mouth-pieces were found in the archaeological finds in Syria and Palestine. They may be said to belong to about B.C. 1200.<sup>3</sup>

All these go to prove that the opinion of Prof. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri in tracing the origin of Muruga to the group of Āryan deities on the basis of references contained in the Sanskrit literature which were earlier to the Śaṅgam literature, is not a satisfactory one.

II. Secondly, Prof. Sastri has tried to trace the word Muruga from Murugh in old Persian and Muruk in Zend. In Persian and Urdu the following are the words springing from the word Murugh:<sup>4</sup>

Murugh	— Cock
Murghi	— hen (Urdu)
Murghab	— Name of a river in Persia
Murghabi	— a watery bird
Murghathesh Khwar	— fire-eater bird

Here we do not find that the word Murugh denotes youth, God, beauty etc. as in Tamil. Moreover, if the word was used to denote God Muruga in the days of Zend Avesta, it must have found a place in the Vēdic literature as the Rig Vēdic Aryans were their kith and kin. But we do not find the word in the Vēdic literature.

If the word Muruga came to the Tamil country from Persia it would have come by either of two routes—one by the land and the other by the sea. If it came by land it must have come to North India first and then to South India. If this is true, the word Muruga must be found in the Sanskrit language and there must be many temples to Muruga in Northern India. But surprisingly we neither find the word in the Sanskrit language nor are there many temples dedicated to Muruga or Subrahmanya in the North.

If the word might have come by sea through foreign trade then it must have reached the coastal areas of Sindh, Kathiawar, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Malabar and later to the Tamil country. But we do not find the word in the Sindhi, Maharāthi etc.

We find the word Muruga in the Dravidian languages with different meanings as follows:<sup>5</sup>

Muruku (Tamil)	— tenderness, tender age, youth, beauty, akanda.
Murukan (Tamil)	— youth, youngman, Skanda
Murukan (Malayalam)	— Subrahmanyam
Muruku (Tulu)	— the young of an animal
Murli (Konda)	— young man.

Thus it is clear that the word Muruga or Murugu is purely Dravidian in origin. It was used in the Sangam Age in different shades of meanings. A few examples here will suffice:—

#### 1. Murugu-Murugan

“Arun̄gadi Vēlan Murugodū Valai”

“அருங்கடி வேலன் முருகோடு வளைஇ”

Madurai-k-kāñchi, 1.611

#### 2. Murugu-Vēlvi (Sacrifice or yāga)

“Padaiyōrkku Murugayara”

“படையோர்க்கு முருகயர்”

Madurai-k-kāñchi, 1.38

#### 3. Murugu-Good smell

“Murugamārpu Murañkidakkai”

“முருகமார்பு முரண்கிடக்கை”

Paṭṭinappalai, 1.37

#### 4. Murugu-Daivam

“Murugu meippāṭṭa pulatti pōla”

“முருகு மெய்ப்பட்ட புலத்திபோல”

Puṣanānūru, v.259

#### 5. Murugu-Vēlan's frenzic dance

“Murugayar-n-duvanda muduvāy Vēlan”

“முருகயர்ந் துவந்த முதுவாய் வேலன்”

Kuṭunttogaī, v.362

The Tamil Lexicon Divākaram and Piṅgalāntai have been composed between the 6th and 8th centuries A. D. (550-750).<sup>6</sup> The Divākaram says that the word Murugu has the meanings of youth, enthusiasm, agil (a kind of tree), fire-wood and festival. The Piṅgalāntai says that the word has the following meanings: beauty, toddy and lime fruit.

Such meanings of the word ‘Murugu’ given in Divākaram Piṅgalāntai were not in use in the Śaṅgam literature available to-day. This shows that there must have been many literary works wherein the word Murugu might have found a place with different meanings. This also reveals the antiquity of the word.

In the Śūjamaṇi (Nāṭṭuppadalam, v. 7), a work of the 10th century,<sup>7</sup> the word Murugu was used to denote a festival intended for God Muruga.

“Murugayar Pāṇiyum”  
“முருகயர் பாணியும்”

In Naidatham, work of the 16th century A.D. the word Murugu means honey.

“Murugu voymaḍu-t-tuṇḍali mūśum”  
“முருகு வாய்மடுத் துண்டளி மூசம்”

Maṇampuripaḍalam, v.23

There are some words which have sprung up from the basic name Murugu. They are as follows:

1. Murugiyam — a kind of drum used at the frantic dance of Vēlan in the hilly country—  
Tolkāppiyam, Poruḷ, S. 18 commentary.
2. Murugayartal — Worshipping Lord Muruga.
3. Murugutval — becoming older.
4. Murugu — a kind of ear ornament

5. Murugan — Lord Muruga (Tirumurugāṇuppaṭai, 1.56)  
                  — young man (Divakaram)  
                  — Vēlan (Piṅgalāntai)
6. Murugavarutti sura—a kind of shark (sea-fish)
7. Murugai—a kind of stone.
8. Murugai-nandu—a kind of crab.

Lexicon, vol. 6, P.3279

After an etymological study of the words denoting Lord Muruga one is inclined to come to the conclusion that the word Murgh of the old Persian or Muruk of the Zend, helps us little or nothing in tracing the history of the Muruga cult of worship. On the other hand Murugan has been derived from the root of Tamil Murugu which means beauty, fragrance, youth, honey and God.

III. “Dravidic-speaking people were predecessors of the Āryans over most of Northern India, and were the only people likely to have been in possession of a culture as advanced as the Indus culture.”<sup>8</sup> Dr. Gurov of Leningrad, one of the scholars who have studied the statuettes in Hārappa thinks that the seated figure with a spear might be Muruga. “.....The Āryan population of Northern India is not, therefore, a pure race, but contained among others, a strong Dravidian element”.<sup>9</sup> “.....The Dravidian cults and Dravidian language have begun to influence the religion and speech of the Āryans in Northern India. No trace of the doctrine of Transmigration is found in the Rig-Vēda, and yet no other doctrine is peculiarly Indian”

“The most important linguistic family in India outside Indo-Āryan is the Dravidian family.....It has become clear that quite a considerable portion of the Sanskrit vocabulary is of Dravidian origin, and that this influence has operated

over a long period in the history of the language.... It is evident from this survey that the main influence of Dravidian on Indo-Āryan was concentrated at a particular historical period, mostly between the later Vēdic period, and the formation of the classical language. This is significant from the point of view of the locality where the influence took place. It is not possible that at this period such influence could have been exercised by the Dravidian languages of the South. There were no intensive contacts with South India before the Maurya period by which time the majority of these words had already been adopted by the Indo-Āryan. If the influence took place in North in the Central Gangetic plain and classical Madhyadēśa, the assumption that the Pre-Āryan population of this area contained a considerable element of Dravidian speakers would best account for the Dravidian words in Sanskrit. The Dravidian Languages, Kurukh and Malto are preserved even now in Northern India, and may be regarded as islands surviving from a once extensive Dravidian territory. The Dravidian words in the Rig-Vēda attest the presence of Dravidian in the North-Western India at that period. Brāhui in Baluchistan remains as the modern representative of North Western Dravidian.”<sup>11</sup>

The above references of different scholars assert the fact that there were Dravidians in Northern India when the Āryans began to spread both in the Punjab and the Gangetic plain. Hence the Āryans were able to absorb the Dravidian deities into their sphere.

“The ancient, as well as modern worship of Siva and Vishṇu and Ambā, are forms of fireless worship and they are utterly different from and opposed to the Vēdic fire-cult.”<sup>12</sup>

“Those Vēdic Gods, the etymology of whose names is not patent, and who have no analogies in other Indo-Germanic

dialects, must have been originally Dravidian deities. The Āryan God, Varuṇa, was probably the God of the Dravidian tribes, being on the borders of the sea, to whom the Āryan Rishis accorded a place in their pantheon. The Āryan Rudra is another God of the Dravidian tribes. He is essentially a mountain deity and could be evolved by the wild mountaineers, say, of the Vindhyan regions and not by dwellers on the plains. His name Rudra meaning the 'Red one' seems to be a translation of the Dravidian name Śiva. Korravai, the victorious matron, was the object of worship among the oldest peoples of the South. The hill-God of the South, the son of Korravai, is Murugan, the fragrant one. The Vēdic God, Krishṇa, corresponds to the God of the Dravidian pastoral tribes. Śaivism i.e., the worship of Śiva or Skanda, was prevalent among the mountain tribes long before the advent of the Āryans into the South. According to Dr. Slater, Kāli, Śiva, and Vishṇu are Dravidian deities, though their worship now forms the innermost essence of Indian Culture".<sup>19</sup>

" Indian religion ", says Sir Charles Elliot, " is commonly regarded as the off-spring of an Āryan religion brought into India by invaders from the North, and modified by contact with the Dravidian civilization. The materials at our disposal hardly permit us to take any other point of view; for the literature of the Vēdic Āryans is relatively ancient and full, and we have no information about the old Dravidians comparable with it. But, were our knowledge less one-sided, we might see that it would be more correct to describe the Indian religion as Dravidian religion stimulated and modified by the ideas of foreign invaders. For the greatest deities of Hinduism such as Śiva, Krishṇa, Rāma and Durga and some of its most essential doctrines such as metempsychosis and divine incarnations are either

totally unknown to the Vēda or obscurely adumbrated in it. The chief characteristics of the native Indian religion are not the characteristics of religion in Persia, Greece or other Āryan lands".<sup>14</sup>

Parrinder, E. G. says in his book on African Traditional Religion (1954), that "twenty five tribes in East Africa worship 'Muruṅgu' as supreme God and suggests that this God is similar to the Murugan, the Dravidian God and in support of his view he says that the East African 'Muruṅgu' also resides in sacred mountains. But the grounds on which his theory has been advanced seems to be too slender. How does it happen that only twenty five tribes worship 'Muruṅgu'? The mere fact that the temples of the East African 'Muruṅgu' are found in mountains does not provide conclusive evidence of that deity's affiliation with Muruga of the Tamils. The other and distinctive characteristics of Muruga are not found associated with the East African Muruṅgu.

By way of conclusion it may be stated that Murugan was an early Tamilian pre-Āryan God with spear or vēl as his weapon and that in course of time he became Āryanised ultimately becoming the Subrahmanyā. In fact the literal meaning of Subrahmanyā is the one 'dear to the brāhmins'.<sup>15</sup> Subsequent to the Āryanisation several legends of the North came to be associated with him. As a consequence Murugan came to be known as Skanda, Somaskanda, Kārtikēya and so forth on the basis of various legends. The process of amalgamation is interesting. Muruga of old had married Valli a Vēda girl in the typical *Kaṭavu* love. The Tamils of old before they came under the influence of the Āryans worshipped in the primitive way by strewing paddy and flowers and offering Tinai (the grains of the millet) and honey. Goat was also sacrificed and this early pattern

of worship was known as the Vēlan worship. The Tirumurugārappadai provides an interesting description of the early rites performed by the Kuṇava priestess (Kuṇamakaḷ). She wears two kinds of garments; first she ties round her waist a red thread (cennūl) and then she unfurls the cock-banner sacred to the god and applies as paste mustard mixed with ghee, murmuring gently and making obeisance. Garlands, incense, red millet mixed with blood all figure in the process of worship. Finally the blessing of the *pinimukam* appears. This refers either to the peacock or elephant of Muruga. The peacock or snake is distinctively associated with Muruga, the lord of Kuṇiñchi.

Muruga was considered the son of Korravai, the old South Indian Goddess of victorious wars, identified later with Durga-Pārvati. Again, it is very significant to note that from early times, Muruga was considered patron of letters and of the Tamil language and culture. (See verses 553 and 563 of Tirumurugārappadai). It is difficult to decide the genesis of Kantu, as representing Muruga. But was it derived from the Sanskrit Skanda? Or did Kantu represent a post to tie an elephant or a pillar, phallic in origin? It is hazardous to provide a final answer.

The Sanskritised Muruga, or Muruga-Subrahmaṇya appears to have emerged as seen above, about the time of the Taitriyea Āraṇyaka, sometime about the 3rd century B.C. There is clear evidence of the Sanskritic idea having entered the conception of Subrahmaṇya, Muruga or Skanda. The Tirumurugārappadai which provides the idea of the combination of the northern and southern conceptions of Muruga, enumerates the functions performed by the six faces of Muruga. Thus the new name Shaṇmukha appears. Two of the faces of Subrahmaṇya are remarkably interesting as pointed out by Kamil V Zelbil. Of these, one face represents the tradition

according to which Sanatkumāra-skanda taught Nārada the esoteric doctrine of the *ātman*, ‘the Self,’ and Brahmā and Śiva the significance of the most sacred syllable *aum* (the first syllable of the Vēda) the other interesting fact is that which performs the eternal surveillance of the Brāhmanic sacrifices.<sup>16</sup>

It is noteworthy that the Āryanised Muruga figures for the first time, to the best of our knowledge, in the temple at Tiruchchendur in the modern Tirunelveli District. The temple is dedicated to Murugan - Subrahmaṇia and it is believed that it was here that he achieved his great victory over Sūrapadma.

Various legends sprang up in due course. The Saiva poem Kallādām for instance exalts Tamil and also Sanskrit. It is stated later that Murugan taught not only the Vēdas to Agastya, but he taught him Tamil, too.

Perhaps the greatest poet who has sung devotional songs in praise of Muruga-Subrahmaṇia is the celebrated Aruṇagirināṭhar of the 15th century A.D. His illustrious *Tiruppugal* contains the blending of the essence of Saiva Siddhānta philosophy, ‘the ancient inheritance of Tamil bardic poetry’ and the vast resources of Āryan mythology. The Tamil view of Muruga is a handsome youth of glowing red complexion, dancing in the red morning-sun on top of every hill, his spear adorned with peacock flowers with which he destroys his age-long enemy, the demon of fear (Sūrapadma).

On the whole, the basic ideas of Muruga are those of the Tamils. They belonged to an earlier age as not only the Ādichchanallūr excavations have shown, but as the discoveries of an earlier date in Palestine, Syria and Cyprus indicate. The Āryans later adopted Muruga and incorporated him into the composite Hindu fold.

## N O T E S

1. C. V. Narayana Ayyar: "Origin and Development of Saivism in South India," p. 102. see also.  
T. R. Sesha Ayyangar: "Ancient Dravidians," p. 109  
R. Sathianathaier: "History of India," Vol. I. pp. 170-171. I have discussed this topic with several scholars in Sanskrit and Tamil.
  2. K. A. N. Sastri himself says this in his "Development of Religion in South India," pp. 21-22.
  3. K. A. N. Sastri: "A History of South India," 1966, p. 57.
  4. I am indebted to Janab Muhammad Yusuf Kokan, Reader in Persian and Urdu, University of Madras, for this information.
  5. A Dravidian Etymological Dictionary by T. Burrow & M. B. Emeneau p. 336, No. 481.
  6. K. Srinivasa Pillai: "Tamil Varalaru." p. 240.
  7. Ibid: p. 240
  8. Mohenjodarō and the Indus Civilisation, Vol. I, p. 42.
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## V. Manu Smriti, The Citadel of Casteism

It is evident that there has been in the history of Hinduism more than one Manu, though several scholars including P. V. Kane deny it. Manu seems to have denoted the Supreme God, and later, he was considered as the law-giver or the author of the *Manusmṛiti* or *Mānava Dharmasāstra*. There are several contradictions in the laws found in the *Manusmṛiti*. Attempts to explain away the contradictions in the various versions of the *Manusmṛiti* particularly in respect of women's status and the position of the Śūdras are not convincing.

According to one tradition there were as many as fourteen Manus who reigned over the fourteen worlds. It is said that in the course of the *Samkalpa* which denotes 'intensive contemplation', really a prelude to every important ceremony, a person must think of Manu. It is added that in the course of that contemplation he is to remind himself that there are fourteen Manus, of whom the important ones are known as *Svarochisha*, *Tamasa*, *Paivata* and *Svayambhuva*. It is said that each Yuga has its own Manu. According to one version in the Kaliyuga, the Vaivasvata Manu is in power and so he is to be worshipped in particular.

True, these may be based on traditions. It is also held by some that the laws of Manu are intended for the Kṛtāyuga, those of Yājñavalkya are for the Tretāyuga, those of Śaṅketa and Likhita are for the Dvāparayuga and those of Parāśara are for the Kaliyuga. Are we to take it therefore that the laws of Manu are not valid for the Kaliyuga ? It would mean that

the laws of the earlier Yugas will also be valid in addition to the respective laws of the special Yugas. Therefore, the laws of Manu as well as the laws of Parāśara appear to be valid for the Kaliyuga.

But when exactly each one of them appeared and what special contribution to the body of Dharmasāstras each one of them provided it is not easy to be ascertained. Apart from the difficulty in determining the order of their succession, the question of ascertaining their dates is equally problematic. In all probability Manu's teachings were passed on as a mass of floating verses from time to time.

It should be noticed that the Vēdic literature mentions several mythical sages including Manu, Angiras and Bhṛgu. The Rig Vēda states that Manu formulated the rites to be performed.<sup>1</sup> It is significant that the earliest Dharmasūtras, those of Gautama, Vasistha and Āpastambha quote Manu. In the extant Manu Smṛiti, Manu is said to have imparted his teachings to Bhṛgu. But these are by no means enough to provide a clue to the exact date of Manu. Some scholars had held that the period of the Vēdic Samhitas, Brāhmaṇas and Upanishads ranges between 4000 B.C. and 1000 B.C. But there are differences of views in respect of this, too. As noticed earlier, the postulate advanced by P. V. Kane regarding the Manusmṛiti between 200 B.C. and A.C. 100 is not acceptable. K. P. Jayaswal also adopted more or less a similar view. But Hopkins and Buhler show that the Mahābhārata knew a Manu text closely connected with the current one.

Another crucial circumstance is that Buddhism and Jainism arose in opposition to the caste system. And though caste had passed through several changes it had emerged as a powerful institution by the 6th century B.C. It may be noted that "revolts against Brāhmanical doctrines appear to have begun long

before the time of Gautama Buddha. The *Suttanipata* speaks of 63 different philosophical schools - most of them non-Brahmanical - existing at the time of the Buddha. Jain texts also exhibit heretical doctrines. .... The non-brāhmaical teachers of this epoch believed neither in the Vēdic gods nor in the Vēdic *dharma* as regulated by the system of castes and orders of life.”<sup>2</sup> Kane’s attempt to hold that Mānavadharmaśāstra was one only on the ground that the divergent statements on taking a Śūdra wife, on eating flesh, and so on, are not really contradictory, is not worth refutation.

Next, there arises the question regarding the extent of Āryavarta where Manu’s code was supposed to have been in force. In later times, roughly about the early centuries of the Christian era, Āryavarta is believed to have comprised India north of the Vindhya. It must be remembered that the Āryans became Hindus only in due course after they had crossed the Sutlej into the country to the north of Delhi. It is significant that the small tract between the rivers Sarasvati and Drishadvati, was specially regarded by the earliest Manu as Brahmvarta, ‘the land of the gods.’ There were still further changes in the denominations of territories, but by the time that the classical Mānavadharma śāstra was rewritten i.e. about the 2nd century B.C. Āryavarta, (according to the Mānavadharmaśāstra) comprised the region between the Himalayas and the Vindhya. There is no doubt, however, that in later times the Mānavadharmaśāstra was applicable to the Hindus all over India.

The contents of the extant Mānavadharmaśāstra, known otherwise as Manu Samhita or Manusmṛiti, comprise 12 chapters consisting of 2,694 couplets. There have been several commentaries on Manusmṛiti by profound scholars of various times. One of the elaborate commentaries is that of Medhatithi of the 9th century A.D. But the most authoritative one is the

handy commentary of Kalluka of the 14th century A.D., though Sir William Jones overestimates its greatness; in fact its conciseness and clarity are its only virtues; but it cannot claim to be an original work.

**Caste:** In respect of the social organisation of the Hindus, Manu is mostly remembered for his description of the origin and development of the caste system. Which Manu created the institution of caste? The oft-quoted Purushasukta hymn is often said to be a later interpolation. But there is little authority for such a conjecture.

It is more accurate to describe Manu's system as Varna, rather than as Jāti, for the latter centred around occupation, though based fundamentally on the basis of Varna or colour. It is well known that the Varṇas which appeared on the distinction of colour were four: the Brāhmaṇa, Kshatṛiya, Vaiśya and Śūdra. But one complication is that generally this four-fold classification based on colour also was associated with occupations, main and subsidiary.

Caste, on the other hand, was essentially based on occupation. For instance, there were cobblers, smiths, woodcutters, barbers, agriculturists and so on. Obviously these were all occupations of Śūdras. At the same time the principal avocation of the Brāhmin was performance of religious rites and ceremonies, while the Kshatṛiya was engaged in warfare and the Vaiśya in commercial activities. While there was laxity among the occupations of the higher castes in later ages; for example, Brāhmīns at times took to warfare and even to trade, the Brāhmīns should not take to agriculture or other manual activities.

Unquestionably the most distinctive feature of the Manusmṛiti is the exalted position given to Brāhmīns. Even according to the Manusmṛiti in vogue in later days, the

injunction is “Let every man according to his ability, give wealth to Brāhmins, detached from the world and learned in Scripture, such a giver shall attain Heaven after his life.”<sup>3</sup> Even more far-reaching and astounding is the assertion that ‘whatever exists in the Universe is all, in effect, though not in form, wealth of the Brāhmins ; since the Brahmin is entitled to it, all by his primogeniture and eminence of birth. In fact, a semi-divine position is assigned to the Brāhmin by Manu who holds : ‘The Brahmin eats but his own food ; wears but his apparel ; and bestows but his own alms ; through the benevolence of the Brāhmins indeed other mortals enjoy life.’<sup>4</sup> Such assertions may best be left without any comment.

It may be mentioned here that not only Manu but Yājñavalkya, believed to have been the next law-giver, assigned a lofty position to the Brāhmins. According to both of them the Brāhmins alone could perform sacrifices, take to the occupation of teaching and accept gifts. The attempt of certain modern writers to contend that even the Sūdras were allowed to perform sacred rites and that they were only denied the use of mantras is by no means convincing. Why, for instance, should there be discrimination in respect of Upanayanam ? The Upanayana ceremony is only for the higher three classes. The Brāhmins must perform the Upanayana in the 8th year; Kshatṛiyas in their 11th year and Vaiśya in the 12th year.<sup>5</sup>

Above all, the superiority of the Brāhmin emerged from his position as *purōhita* which is distinctively seen from the Taittiriya Samhita. It is also held that Manu was one of the founders of the sacrificial cult.

*Punishments :* The discrimination among castes is seen at its worst in the scheme of penalties ordained for people of various castes for identical crimes committed. In respect of this the special favour shown to the Brāhmins and next to them to

the other dvijas is clearly seen. As the most privileged class, Brāhmins were to receive lesser punishment. Not only that; those who cause offence to Brāhmins are to be punished with special severity. Use of improper words to Brāhmins, Kshatṛiyas and Vaiśyas by Śūdras was to be penalised with severity in proportion to the higher position of the caste. Thus unwholesome words used towards Brāhmins were to receive the severest punishment by the Śūdras, the Kshatṛiyas less punishment and the Vaiśyas still less punishment. A Śūdra, who without consent, issues commands to Brāhmins to do certain things was to be punished very severely ; into his mouth and ears boiled oil should be poured. Any Śūdra who arrogantly sits on high pedestal like a brāhmaṇī should be branded with red-hot iron rod on the hips or other injury should be caused to his limbs. Any non-brāhmaṇī who ill treats or disrespects the brāhmaṇī must have his arms cut off. Those who hurt brāhmaṇīs are born as cats in the next birth (Manu XII : 59). Those who misappropriate property belonging to brāhmaṇīs will be born as Brahmarakshasas.

Any dvija who is poor, but who deprives of a Śūdra edible roots and fruits, should not be subject to any punishment.

If a woman of a lower caste has union with a man of a higher caste, the latter should not be punished at all. A woman of higher caste, accused of moral lapses, should be mildly punished in the house itself. A Śūdra who has sexual relation with a dvija woman must suffer severe punishment ; eventually the sexual offences depended on the caste of the offender. It must be noted that whatever be the nature of the offence committed by the Brāhmaṇī, he should not be deprived of his life ; the utmost retribution was the deprivation of his property in accordance with the nature of the offence. Above all, it was solemnly decreed that the worst sin on earth is to kill a brāhmaṇī.

On the other hand, a brāhmaṇī could command any service of a Śūdra with or without paying remuneration. The entire dispensation of justice was caste-oriented. The Śūdra was the worst sufferer. It is however notable that Manu recognises *Vrātya*, who was considered an outcaste. Some think that he was an untouchable, but technically *Vrātya* meant only a degraded person. Even a dvija failing to perform Upanayana at the prescribed time, becomes a *Vrātya* according to Manu i.e. one discarded by the Āryans.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, it is not proper to consider him an untouchable. Manu says that there is no fifth varṇa. Probably in due course the chandālas, svāpacās and certain others became untouchables on account of their life in the remote villages and the development of filthy habits.

*The Āśramas* : Before we conclude the consideration of the rights and duties of the particular castes according to the Manu-smṛiti it is necessary to speak of the Āśramas or the four stages of life which were obligatory on the dvijas. There is every likelihood that the original Manu of the Vēdīc period had formulated this idea of the four āśramas. It is well known that the four Āśramas were those of Brahmachārya, Grihastha, Vānaprastha and Sanyāsa. A Brahmachāri should lead the life of an austere student. His duties and rights during the period of Gurukulavāsa are elaborately laid down. Education was expected to commence after the Upanayana ceremony. Then arises the question as to what provision there was for the education of the Śūdras. All kinds of laboured explanation like some Śūdras having become learned and that even some brāhmaṇins learned the Vēdas through certain Śūdras, if at all true, must have been exceptional. This suppression of the Śūdras has been one of the grave pieces of injustice done to Śūdras through the ages in the history of India.

The Brāhmaṇins alone could take to the occupation (*vṛitti*) of teaching, perform sacrifices for others and accept gifts. It must be noted that Manu expressly forbids other castes to adopt any

of these functions. Through the ages it is this invidious distinction that has led to the intellectual degeneracy of the Śūdras in particular. The despicable position of the Śūdras through the ages is described by James Mill in his *History of India*. According to his balanced judgement the vices of caste subordination were carried to a more destructive point among the Hindus than among any other people. One need not be a politician to understand this ; any impartial student of history would realise it.

In fact, in the latter age, the Śūdra and the woman came to suffer contemptuous treatment. The circumstance that in ancient Rome, too, a similar kind of ill treatment of the lower class of people and women alike existed does not exonerate the Hindu social practice. Manu ordains that the Śūdras must be reduced to slavery because they are created by God for the sake of serving others.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, women and children, too, were under the tyranny of the family. According to Manu, a Śūdra even when released from slavery is not emancipated because he is a born slave. The same was the position of the woman. What is true of the Śūdras is also true of the woman. In respect of education, too, the similarity of the position of woman and Śūdra is conspicuous.

Regarding the education of the dvijas, the duration of the period varied with the capacity of the students. It lasted generally from 9 to 36 years. Two kinds of teachers are found mentioned, namely Āchārya and Upādhyāya. Āchārya was generally more learned and dedicated to his work and therefore he was more respected than the Upādhyāya.

During the gṛhasthāśrama stage, the persons should lead the life of a disciplined gṛhastha of character. Simplicity of habits and systematic application to work were commended during this stage.

The *Vānaprastha* and the succeeding *Sanyāsa* deal with the stages following in succession the ordinary wordly life; really they are concerned with the spiritual quest. After attaining a mature age a person should retire to the forest and lead a life of abstinence from sense enjoyments. He must subsist on roots and fruits but at the same time should be constantly engaged in the study of the scriptures.

During the last stage which is *sanyāsa*, sometimes known as *parivṛājaka*, he engages himself in performing sacrifices and in contemplation. Really during this period he acquires knowledge, ultimately leading to self-realisation. In fact, the philosophical thought emphasised in respect of *sanyāsa* has a similarity with the subtle ideas enshrined in the Bhagavad-Gīta. Keith says that *Manusmṛiti* is not merely important as a law-book, but “it ranks as the expression of a philosophy of life.” It must be admitted that several Indian and foreign scholars have lavished undue praise on Manu. Nietzsche esteemed Manu above the Bible. Br̥haspati in his *Smṛiti* states : “Different śāstrās strut about only so long as Manu, the teacher of *dharma*, *artha* and *moksha* does not appear on the scene.”<sup>9</sup> The Mahābhārata records a story current at the time of the epoch relating how Br̥haspati, the sceptic, had a long discussion with Manu, one of the founders of the sacrificial cult and was in the end converted to the latter’s viewpoint. It is difficult to determine how far this is reliable.

Most astounding is the inflated statement of Nietzsche : “I know of no book in which so many delicate and kindly things are said of women as in the law-book of Manu ; these old grey heads and saints have a manner of being gallant to women, which perhaps cannot be surpassed.” Which Manu does he speak of and what kind of treatment of woman does he glorify?” True, he realises the importance of woman as a component part of man, the two together making a complete whole.<sup>10</sup>. But how

does Nietzsche explain Manu's dictum that 'Women should not perform any sacrifice or vow; no fast should be performed by them apart from their husbands, and no girl or young woman has the right to offer agnihotra'.<sup>11</sup> How does he explain Manu's view that even though the husband be of bad character seeking pleasure elsewhere he must be constantly worshipped as God by a faithful wife.<sup>12</sup>

It is true that Manu gives the woman in some places a respectable position also. According to him 'where women are not honoured, all religious acts become futile'.<sup>13</sup> He adds that men should always honour women for their own prosperity and interest.<sup>14</sup> On the whole, as stated earlier, Manusmṛiti, as it stands at present, is an embodiment of contradictions in regard to the position of women.

There arises one interesting question regarding the early institution of marriage. Could the institution of marriage have appeared as early as the Vedic age? Probably some marriages took place even then; but at the same time promiscuity also seems to have existed. The Mahābhārata states that in the land of Uttarakurus in the city of Mahishamati the institution of marriage did not exist. The epic holds that it was the sage Svētakētu who decreed that promiscuity should be supplanted by regular marriage. But marriage had certainly appeared by Vedic age; can it be that the reference in the Mahābhārata has to be taken to refer to a pre-Vedic age? More difficult is the determination of the time when intercaste marriages, both in the *anuloma* and *pratiloma* forms appeared; perhaps they emerged even in the age of Manu.

According to the extant Manusmṛiti, a man of thirty years of age could marry a girl of twelve, a man of twentyfour could marry a girl of eight years of age. Disregard of these restrictions is against the Vedic injunctions.

Further, while according to the Vēdic ideal the wife was to be treated as a partner and as the mistress of the home, in the period after 600 B.C., the position changed. Instances of daughters-in-law having sought refuge in nunneries in order to escape from the tyranny of their mothers-in-law in anger threatening with a pestle are found. It is not known whether the daughter-in-law retaliated. Widow marriage had appeared early though child marriage and *sati* came to be adopted only later.

Almost the same is the position of the Śūdra. There is no ignoring the fact that Manu discriminates between the twice-born on the one hand, and the woman and the Śūdra on the other. Regarding food, for example, it was thought to be sinful to eat the leavings of a Śūdra and woman.

In respect of religious position the low status accorded to the woman and Śūdra is traceable to the later Vēdic epoch. Manu too lays down that during the period of the Chandrāyana vow it is not proper on any account to talk to a woman, a Śūdra and an outcaste.<sup>15</sup> Not only that. Manu declares that the wife, the son and the slave are all unpropertied; whatever they earn is the property of those to whom they belong.<sup>16</sup> On top of these Manu ordains that the Śūdras must be reduced to slavery either by purchase or without purchase because they are created by God for the sake of serving others.<sup>17</sup> He goes a step forward and says that a Śūdra, even when released from slavery is not emancipated because slavery is inborn in him.<sup>18</sup>

One thing is certain. At least with reference to women, there are certain ideas in Manusmṛiti which accord a respectable position, as noticed earlier. But the Śūdra had no redemption; he was condemned to perpetual bondage and suppression. 'Medhātithi, the commentator of Manu, accords a slightly better status to the Śūdras than that given to them by Manu.

One word in extenuation of the attitude developed by Manu towards Brāhmins in particular and the dvijas in general must however be recognised. The Brāhmin had not only rights but had also certain duties. Their discipline, learning and dedication to their respective duties are emphasised. The brāhmin is expected to be friendly to all; their dealings with all must be fair and honest. The brāhmin should not be crooked and deceitful.<sup>19</sup> Besides these general prescriptions ten specific personal qualities are considered essential; viz. fortitude, forbearance, self-control, not depriving others of their possessions, purity, self control, learning, knowledge of the self, truth and absence of anger. Though these prescriptions are specified for the Brāhmīns in particular, the others also were expected to observe them. Moreover, for all the four varṇas, non-violence, truth, non-thieving, purity and self-control were essential qualities to be cultivated.

One of the most redeeming features in respect of the lofty position accorded to Brāhmīns by Manu, it must be mentioned that he says: "The Brāhmaṇa, who not having studied the Vēdas, labours elsewhere becomes a Śūdra in that very life along with his descendants." Again, he adds that a Śūdra becomes a Brāhmaṇa by proper conduct. This is an incredibly liberal view. Obviously this is one of those contradictions found in Manusmṛiti. In fact, if this liberal attitude had prevailed throughout, Manusmṛiti would have deserved all the encomiums bestowed on it.

On the whole, though several Europeans and naturally many Brāhmīns have unduly praised the Manusmṛiti and its effects on society, a dispassionate study of it reveals that it provided a kind of division of labour and to that extent the social order was maintained. The greatest benefit was for the Brāhmīns who by reason of the facility for religious and intellectual progress developed their culture. It is often described as Hindu culture but in reality it was pre-eminently

Brāhmaṇ culture. Progress in arts, philosophy and religion was greatly promoted by the facilities enjoyed by the Brāhmaṇins. But if we take the entire body of Hindus into consideration, it was an unjust organisation. The Śūdras, no doubt, were the worst sufferers and the untouchables who emerged in due course as a by-product of the four-fold caste system suffered still more. But that was not the age of democracy. In other countries, too, the sections which occupied a high position derived great advantage at the expense of the lower sections of society.

Though there were several smṛitis later like the Yājñavalkya smṛiti, Viṣṇu Smṛiti and Nārada Smṛiti, the basic structure of the Mānavadharmaśāstra was not altered. Yājñavalkya defines the rights of widows more clearly than Manu, while it was under Viṣṇu Smṛiti that the range of Aryavarta was extended to the whole of India. Manu was against the remarriage of women, but Nārada allowed it. This change however, was not radical or fundamental; it was tolerated.

So far as Tamil Nādu is concerned, the reference to Manu and other Dharmasāstras appeared only late. It is difficult to contend, as Vaiyapuri Pillai has done, that certain couplets of Tirukkural like Kuṭṭal 58 and 396 have their parallels in Manu. This is on a close analysis found far-fetched. Further, Manu's influence is not to be seen in the Tolkāppiyam. Manu says that the hero cannot leave the heroine for twelve days after her monthly periods. Tolkāppiyar, on the other hand, does not object to the hero going with his spouse even out of his country at any time, in utter disregard of the monthly period.

In fact, the earliest occurrence of Manu appears only in Tinaimālai.<sup>20</sup> There Manu refers to a king who set an example for just rule. This must have been in the 6th century A.D. or later. Really, Manu's influence like Sanskrit influence in general, became conspicuous in the Tamil country only in the age of the Great Pallavas.

**N O T E S**

1. R. V., VIII. 30-3
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  3. Manu. XI. 6
  4. Manu. I. 100-101
  5. Manu. II : 36
  6. Manu II : 39
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  10. Manu IX, 45
  11. Ibid XI, 36
  12. Ibid V, 154
  13. Ibid III, 56
  14. Ibid III, 56-59
  15. Manu XI, 224
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  19. Manu IV, 11
  20. 150 : 149 : 1
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## VI. Asoka's Place in World History

It is well known that Asoka was a great personality not only in the history of India but in the history of the world as a whole. However, not all scholars realise precisely on what his unique greatness rests. Normally kings have attained fame through their conquests, organisation of sound administrative systems or development of statesmanlike policies. But the case of Asoka was different. In fact he was not a great conqueror. A large part of his empire had been acquired by his father, Bindusara, and grandfather, Chandragupta.

Asoka's well known conquest was that of Kalinga, undertaken in the 13th year of his reign. An account of this war and its effects is given by Asoka himself in his Rock Edict III. Terrific were the ravages caused by the war. Myriads of people were killed or wounded. That moved him deeply and led to his promulgation of the Law of Piety. Not only that. His love of that Law and his inculcation of that Law (Dharma) became clearly marked. They formed the distinctive features of his career ever since the termination of the Kalinga war.

What is more important is the fact that the conquest of Kalinga became a great landmark in the history of India. It opened a new era of peace, of social progress and of religious propaganda. The age of military conquest or Digvijaya was over so far as Asoka was concerned; and in its place the era of spiritual conquest or Dhamma-vijaya had begun. Asoka became an ardent Buddhist and he propagated it with all the zeal he could command.

It is important to remember that Aśoka was not a born pacifist. Though we cannot believe the story that as Yuvarāja he had killed his 98 brothers, there is no doubt that he had to fight a war of succession for about four years. The story of Aśoka's murders of his kinsmen before his accession is untrustworthy. Aśoka's inscriptions themselves prove that his brothers and sisters were alive in the 17th and 18th years of reign. That Aśoka had participated in war in the reign of Bindusāra is learnt from the inscriptional evidence that the people of Taxila had revolted and that the first of these revolts was subdued by As'oka.

Indeed As'oka's personal reminiscences show that in the early years he had lived the life of his predecessors, consuming flesh food freely, besides indulging in drink and dance. There is absolutely no doubt that the change of As'oka's religion has to be directly attributed to the Kaliṅga war. The Madras University Professor, V. R. R. Dikshitar, had advanced the view that As'oka never became a Buddhist and that he remained a Hindu throughout his life. But this is not acceptable though several others have also held that As'oka was not a Buddhist. As'oka's Bhābru Edict gives the lie direct to this view because in that Edict As'oka categorically declares his faith in the Buddha, Dhamma and the Saṅgha. Again, the edict at Māski which was discovered in 1915 uses the name *Dēvānāmpivasa Aśokasa* which settles the controversy.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, As'oka was responsible for organising the third Buddhist Council to expound the Buddhist doctrines. Though some have doubted this the Dīpavamśa states that it was Aśoka who convoked this Council. Measures to spread Buddhism were also undertaken enthusiastically. He gave up once and for all tours of pleasure and on the other hand he went on Dharma Yatras.

Many of these details are gathered from his inscriptions, the importance of which cannot be overemphasized. The wide variety of his inscriptions includes the two Minor Edicts,

the Bhābrū Rock Edict, the two Kaliṅga Rock Edicts, the Fourteen Rock Edicts, the Seven Pillar Edicts, the Four Minor Pillar Edicts, the two commemorative Pillar Inscriptions and the three Cave Inscriptions. As a matter of fact, they give us not only a complete picture of the life and achievements of As'ōka but also a peep into the working of the inner mind of As'ōka himself. A Professor of History at Delhi has gone to the extent of holding that As'ōka was Marxist in his outlook. This, however, is a needless importation of new fangled ideas and terminology into ancient history. In fact, Marxism is based on an economic interpretation of history. As'ōka's philosophy and outlook covered a much wider sphere than that of Karl Marx. Nor is it correct to hold that As'ōka concentrated on spiritualism neglecting the economic well being of the people.

Among his inscriptions undoubtedly the most important ones were the Fourteen Rock Edicts.<sup>2</sup> They contain an exposition of As'ōka's fundamental principles of government and his ethical system. Edict I of this series condemns animal sacrifices. In Edict II, As'ōka described the medical arrangements made for men and animals. Edict III asked the officers to go on tours every five years. The principles of the Law of Piety are also enunciated in this Edict. Some other principles of the Dharma are described in Edict IV. Edict V refers to the appointment of Dharma Mahāmāṭrās. Edict VI, among other prescriptions, lays emphasis on self-restraint. Edicts VII and VIII refer to the pilgrimages of As'ōka. Edict IX describes what is true gift and true ceremonial. In Edict X it is stated that the king and high officers must exert themselves for the good of the people. Edict XI says that the highest gift is the gift of Dhamma. In Edict XII emphasis is laid on religious toleration. As'ōka's respect for other religious creeds is very commendable. His Twelfth Rock Edict puts up a passionate plea for tolerance. Edict XIII furnishes details of the Kalinga war. Edict XVI

repeats the messages of the king and states that this had been done in order to create among the people a desire to lead a spiritual life.

His noble ideals were revealed in all these inscriptions. He became a champion of pacifism in the midst of triumph. His social ideal was the unity of mankind under the sovereignty of the Dhamma, universal in its connotation and application, and the happiness of "man and beast."

Though an ardent Buddhist, as stated earlier, he was a great exponent of religious toleration. This is quite evident from his classical Edict XII. True, he prohibited animal sacrifices but he did not condemn the Dēvās and the Brāhmins. Nor was he hostile to the Jains. Moreover, he was responsible for the construction and dedication of certain cave dwellings in the Barabar Hills to the Ājīvikas. Besides, he laboured hard to secure concord among the various creeds of and zealously attempted to prevent schism within the Buddhist Church itself. In fact, he expounded his religious policy clearly and pointedly thus : "The king does reverence to men of all sects."

He was a broadminded moralist. His famous Dhamma or Law of Piety contained fundamental principles like mastery of the senses, purity of thought, gratitude, charity and truthfulness.

Nor was he content with laying down maxims for others. He practised what he preached. His ideal of kingship can be gleaned from his two Kaliṅga Edicts and Rock Edict VI. In the two Kaliṅga Edicts Asoka started by affirming that men were his children, implying thereby that he must work for their benefit. But the spiritual edification was the dominant aim he had in view.

To say that is not to mean that he neglected the routine work of administration or the economic well-being of his

people. Perhaps for some time after the Kaliṅga war, his concentration on the inculcation and spread of Buddhism prevented him from devoting much attention to the usual administrative responsibilities. His own realization of the failure in this respect it was that must have made him record in his Rock Edict VI that “For a long time past business had not been disposed of, nor have reports been received at all hours. I have accordingly arranged that at all hours and in all places—whether I am dining or in the ladies’ apartments, in my bedroom or in my closet, in my carriage or in the palace gardens—the official reporters should keep me constantly informed of the people’s business which business of the people I am ready to dispose of at any place.” He goes on to add: “Work I must for the public benefit—and the root of the matter is in exertion and dispatch of business, than which nothing is more efficacious for the general welfare.” “And for what do I toil? For no other end than this that I may discharge my debt to animate beings, and that while I make some happy in this world, they may in the next world gain Heaven.” He appointed Dhāraṇī Mahamāṭṛās and Dhāraṇī Yuktas to do propaganda work, to prevent injustice and generally promote the welfare of the people.

There has been a doubt whether he sent a religious mission to Śrī Laṅka. But Rock Edict XIII speaks of Aśoka’s messengers spreading the *dharma-vijaya* as far as the Mediterranean and on this side down to Tāmbapāṇī (Śrī Laṅka). But the edict does not refer to the Buddhist mission of Aśoka’s son, Mahēndra to Śrī Laṅka; only traditional accounts speak of it, which hold that on the special request of Tissa, the Sinhalese king, Aśoka sent Mahēndra at the head of a Buddhist mission. A second mission is reported to have been under Saṅgamitṛā who, it is believed, took a branch of the sacred Bōdhi tree from Gaya and had planted it in Śrī Laṅka. It is learnt that later some Buddhist relics were sent which were enshrined in a

stūpa in Śrī Laṅka. There is a fresco on a wall in the caves of Ajanta which some artists take it as representing Aśoka's mission to Tissa, the king of Śrī Laṅka. But others have cast a doubt on this view. But in the light of Rock Edict XIII and of the tradition about the second mission, one can safely assert that Aśoka had contributed to the spread of Buddhism in Śrī Laṅka.

Several writers have sought to compare Aśoka with some of the great personalities who have figured in the history of the world. It is improper to compare him with Julius Caeser and Napoleon as has been done by some, because they were ambitious conquerors of countries only. They were engrossed in material achievements. Alexander was purely selfish and aggressive, while Julius Caesar was immoral to boot.

Comparisons with David and Solomon, St. Paul, Constantine, Khalif Omar and Akbar are a few others which have appeared. Though Akbar made some experiments in understanding and coordinating some of the religions and though he stood for religious toleration, he was before all things a politician and a man of the world and was in no mood to endanger his sovereignty for the cause of religious truth.

Perhaps the most rational comparison is with St. Paul, because it was St. Paul, who transformed Christianity into a great religion of the world. This is exactly what Aśoka did in respect of Buddhism. Aśoka was not merely a patron but an apostle of Buddhism. However, St. Paul was not a monarch. In reality, comparisons of men on dissimilar positions are extremely difficult. Aśoka's real place in human history is the place of honour as king-Prophet, a philosopher king, in a way comparable with Marcus Aurelius. Aśoka is a unique figure in the history of the world because he had a clear grasp of the true values of human life and in his strenuous endeavour to live up to those ideals throughout his life.

Asoka's zeal for religion did not deter him from an enthusiastic patronage of art. V. A. Smith, a great authority on Indian history and art, states that the definite history of Indian art begins with Asoka<sup>3</sup>. Nor can we doubt his efforts to spread Buddhism to Burma, several countries in modern South East Asia, to Nepal and Tibet and even to Iran and Afghanistan and distant Greece. Unquestionably it became through the efforts of Asoka a world-religion, as it continues to be in the present, for its votaries number about one-third of the entire human race.<sup>4</sup>

It cannot be too strongly emphasised that Asoka transformed the course of the religious history of the world. K. J. Saunders does not seem to exaggerate when he writes, "The missions of king Asoka are amongst the greatest civilising influences in world's history; for they entered countries for the most part barbarous and full of superstition, and amongst these animistic peoples Buddhist principles spread as a wholesome leaven.

" The history of Ceylon and Burma (as of Siam, Japan and Tibet) may be said to begin with the entrance into them of Buddhism; and in these lands it spread far more rapidly and made a far deeper impression than in China with its already ancient civilization. As Christianity spread very rapidly amongst the animistic peoples of Africa, the South Sea islands, exerting a strong influence and replacing superstition and chaos by a reasoning belief in One God and an orderly universe; so Buddhism in these eastern lands had exerted a beneficent influence by putting *karma*, the law of cause and effect, in the place of caprice of demons and tribal gods, and a lofty system of morals in the place of tribal custom and taboo.

" The Buddhist missionaries, moreover, brought with them much of the culture of their own land. It seems clear, for instance, that it was that Mahinda (Mahendra) who brought

into Ceylon the arts of stone carrying and of irrigation which his father had so successfully practised in India; and the Ceylon Buddhist of today thinks of his religion as the force to which his country owes the greatness of her past history. Not far from the ruined city of Anurāddhapura a lovely rocky hill rises out of a dense sea of jungle, and here is the rock-hewn 'study' and the tomb of the great and gentle prince Mahendra who about 250 B. C. brought Buddhism to Ceylon.”<sup>5</sup>

‘Upto Aśoka’s time architecture was mostly wooden. It was Aśoka who made it lithic.’<sup>6</sup> Even more than architecture, the sculpture of Aśoka’s age exhibits a mature form of art. Though influenced by Persian and Hellenistic elements, the sculpture of Aśoka’s age was mainly Indian in both spirit and execution. Take, for instance, the celebrated Sārnāth capital, the perfect execution of which is praised by Sir John Marshall.<sup>7</sup> It is not possible to agree with Chandas view that the lions of Sāranath display a combination of Asyro-persian traditions with indigenous elements.

In spite of his unique greatness, some critics stress the fact that Aśoka was responsible for the downfall of the Mauryan Empire. Several writers have held that Aśoka’s pacifism must have considerably damped the morale of his army. The opposition of the Brāhmins was turned to good account by Pushyamitṛa Suṅga. But, in reality, the deeper causes for the downfall of the Mauryan empire are to be sought in the weakness of the successors of Aśoka.

The view is sometimes advanced in some quarters that he was the grave-digger of Buddhism itself. The monastery become less self-reliant and more corrupt. But surely this was not the fault of Aśoka.

A few scholars regard him as vain and boastful. The accusation of vanity is based on the old interpretation of a famous passage in the Minor Rock Edict I that Aśoka claims to have dethroned the Brāhmins from their position as bhūdēvās

(gods on earth), but the generally accepted sense of the passage as now understood is that he made irreligious people religious by his exertions. As stated earlier the missions of Aśoka are amongst the greatest civilising influences in world's history, for they entered countries for the most part barbarous and full of superstition, and amongst these animistic peoples Buddhistic principles spread a wholesome leaven.

No doubt, he was guilty of some exaggerations. For instance, he claims to have made curative arrangements for men and animals in the Tamil kingdoms and even in the dominions of Antiochus Theos and his neighbours. These small drawbacks only show that he was a mortal, but unquestionably he was a great mortal in the history of the world.

What might have been the socio-religious history of India if Buddhism, so enthusiastically spread by Aśoka had survived in India? What would have been the nature of the contact of India with other regions of Asia if Buddhism had not declined from its motherland? The student of history is not called upon to speculate on the 'ifs' of possibilities. But here it was almost a reality, and the disappearance of Buddhism which had been ardently fostered by As'oka from the land of its birth has been a rather inexplicable and rather unfortunate phenomenon. True, Buddhism in its turn developed certain shortcomings after the disappearance of As'oka. Nevertheless, the basic principles of his religion were kept alive. Perhaps the political and socio-religious problems of India might have been different from what they turned out to be.

It is not importing politics into contemporary history if we realise that the bold move of Dr. Ambedkar would not only have elevated the position of the down-trodden Harijans but would have enlarged the ranks of the Buddhists. If only the political concessions granted to the low classes had been conceded to the neo-Buddhists, perhaps the population and prominence of the Buddhists would have incredibly increased and the future of Buddhism might well be a remarkable phenomenon. Viewed in a radically different spirit and a different standpoint Ambedkar and certainly not Kanishka would have gone down to history as the second As'oka,

## N O T E S

1. M. Senart too, says that "in the *Dharma* there is nothing exclusively Buddhist". Not less notable is that of Kern who in his '*Manual of Indian Buddhism*' maintains that "his inscriptions with a few exceptions, contain nothing particularly Buddhistic". H. H. Wilson, Fr. Heras & P. T. S. Iyengar also held that Aśoka was not a Buddhist. C. J. Shah, in his '*Jainism in Northern India*', p. 143, thinks that Aśoka was a Jain. This is not supported by adequate evidence. The Rumindei inscription states that Asoka went in person to and offered worship at the birth-place of the Buddha.
  2. Mrs. Debala Mitra, Asst. Superintendent of Archaeology, Indian Museum, Calcutta, states that Iranian influence is seen in the language of Aśokan inscriptions: for example; the word *dipi* (for Indian *lipi*) and *nipiṣṭa* (for *likhita*) in some of the Aśokan edicts may be noted. But this requires further study. See also Chanda R. P. Memoirs of Archaeological Survey of India No. 31; 1926.
  3. V. A. Smith : Oxford History of India, p. 133, 1954.  
The progress in architecture and sculpture was remarkable. The pillars of Aśoka are great products of skill.
  4. Its spread to China, Korea and Japan and to parts of Western and Central Asia seems to have occurred between the 2nd and 1st century B. C. There is, however, reference to the Greeks in Aśokan edicts.
  5. K. J. Saunders : The Story of Buddhism pp. 76-9.
  6. D. R. Bhandarkar : Aśoka (Second Edition), p. 88.  
Sir Mortimer Wheeler and A. L. Basham accept it, though with a reserve.
  7. V. A. Smith : Oxford History of India, 1958, p. 134.
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## VII. Jainism in Kerala

Several scholars, European and Indian, have conducted researches on Jainism, its origin, history, its tenets and distinctive contributions to Indian culture. Prof. Buhler, Dr. Jacobi, Dr. Charpentier, Dr. Hoernle, Mrs. Sinclair Stevenson, Dr. Banarsidas Jain, Dr. P. B. Desai, Seenī Venkataswamy and Dr. B. A. Saletore are some of them. However, certain problems connected with the history of Jainism still remain unsettled.

*Date of Mahāvīra:* The date of Vardhamāna Mahāvīra is one of the controversial issues. The commonly accepted view is that he was born in 599 B.C. and that after 72 years of life he attained *Nirvāṇa* in 527 B.C. But Dr. Jacobi and Dr. Charpentier, after examining the circumstantial evidence, fix Mahāvīra's date as 539 to 467 B.C. Calculating backward on the basis of the known chronology of Chandragupta Maurya, Hēmachandra held that the death of Mahāvīra took place in 468 B.C.

According to another tradition, Mahāvīra's death occurred 470 years before the birth of Vikramā, whose era began 18 years later in 58 B.C. On this basis the death of Mahāvīra ought to have occurred in 546 B.C. ( $470+58+18$ ). It is not possible in the present state of our knowledge to be dogmatic on the exact date of Mahāvīra. The subject deserves to be investigated further, though as stated earlier, 527 B.C. is now generally accepted as the date of his death, and it is on that basis that the 25th Centenary celebrations took place last year.

In this connection I would like to suggest that some Universities can concentrate on the intensive study of the various

religions, their tenets and history. I think that the mechanical manufacture of graduates and post graduates has to be restrained within reasonable limits, while intensive research should be promoted. Even the so-called Doctorate Degrees are more or less farcical. In certain Universities advanced studies of particular religions may be undertaken. For instance, in Kerala, one of the three Universities may open advanced centres of research on Jainism, Buddhism and Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. It need hardly be added that in addition to the learned but often fanatic devotees of these particular religions, others well versed in modern methods of research may be associated with these departments. Objectivity in methods of historical and philosophical research in humanities still form desideratum.

*Fallacies* : Certain fallacies regarding Jainism had gained ground in times past. One of these was that Jainism was merely an off-shoot of Buddhism. However, it is now widely recognised by scholars that Jainism had an independent origin and was a separate religion by itself. It is true that in some respects there was resemblance between the tenets of Jainism and Buddhism. Both rejected the authority of the Vēdās, avoided rituals and stressed the ethical rules of life. Both emphasised the law of Karma. In spite of these common features there were differences and the two religions clung tenaciously to their distinctive tenets and beliefs.

Another common fallacy was that Mahāvīra was the founder of Jainism just as the Buddha was of Buddhism. But in reality Mahāvīra was only the 24th Tīrthaṅkara or Prophet of Jainism. According to the sacred books of Jainism, the actual founder of Jainism was Rishabha and twenty three Tīrthaṅkaras are said to have succeeded him. The 23rd Tīrthaṅkara was Pārśavanāth, who was unquestionably an historical figure. He was the son of Aśvasēna, the ruler of Benares. Pārśavanāth is believed to have lived sometime in the 8th century B. C. In the beginning he led

the life of a householder; but since he was devoted to contemplation he became deeply immersed in meditation for 83 days and attained the profound knowledge called Kēvala.

*Mahāvīra* : Vardhamāna, too, began as a householder ; he married and had a daughter.<sup>1</sup> Being an ascetic, he wandered for 12 years, often doing penance. He subjected himself to various kinds of self-mortification, and eventually, after twelve years of wandering he attained Nirvāṇa and became a Jīna and a Kevalin.

The teachings of Pārsavanāth were broadly adopted by Mahāvīra ; he added the vow of chastity to the four vows, not to injure life, not to utter falsehood, not to steal and not to possess any property, already propounded by Pārsavanāth. By far the basic contribution of Mahāvīra was the emphasis on Ahimsa. There are some who think that the Svētāmbaras (white clad) were the followers of Pārsavanāth and that Digambarās were the adherants of Mahāvīra. This is not indisputably settled because Mahāvīra had an attachment to the Svētāmbaras as well. In fact, he tried to bring about a rapprochement between the two sects, but he did not succeed in his endeavour.

#### *The fundamental tenets of Jainism :*

As stressed by Mahāvīra the three essentials of good life are right faith, right knowledge and right action. These are called the three jewels or Ratnas. Mahāvīra laid the greatest emphasis on a life of virtue and ahimsa, causing no injury to animals or even plants. Mortification for the realisation of truth was stressed. Death by starvation or even suicide was commended. Mahāvīra was a champion of nudity and he called upon his followers to go about naked, thus showing his distinctive preference to the Digambara ideal.

He was opposed to Mantrās and Yāgas. It may be mentioned, however, that in later days the Jains developed a flair for Mantrās and we hear of Mantravādins in some Jaina

inscriptions. Mahāvīra's view was that God is the only manifestation of the powers which remain latent in the souls of men. He believed in Karma and said that Karma must be annihilated by means of austerities, which included starvation.

### *Spread of Jainism in South India:*

Regarding the advent of Jainism in South India there is an old Jain tradition recorded in later Jain works. The Jains always treat Chandragupta Maurya as a Jain. The tradition is that when the Jain saint Bhadrabāhu predicted a famine in northern India which would last for twelve years, and the prophesy began to be fulfilled, the saint led 12,000 Jains to the south about 296 B. C., in search of more favoured lands. Chandragupta abdicated and accompanied the emigrants, who made their way to Śravaṇa Belgōla (the 'White Jain Tank') in Mysore where Bhadrabāhu soon died. The ex-Emperor Chandragupta, having survived him for 12 years, starved himself to death.

The tradition is supported by (a) the names of the buildings at Śravaṇa Belgōla (b) inscriptions beginning from the 7th century after Christ and (c) a literary work of the 10th century A.D.

Though these pieces of evidence are not conclusive, the main facts affirmed by tradition are probably true. Chandragupta was quite young when he ascended the throne about 322 B. C. He must have been under fifty when his reign terminated 24 years later. His abdication is an adequate explanation of his disappearance at such an early age.

After the Jains had come to Śravaṇa Belgōla they sent some of their leaders to Tamil Nādu. Whether the Bhadrabāhu tradition is true or not it is clear the Jains must have come to the south before the 2nd century B. C. because their Brāhmī inscriptions, mostly donative records, assignable to 2nd

century B. C. are found in Madurai and Tirunelveli districts. Though the script of these inscriptions is Brahmi of the southern variety, the language employed is generally Tamil in its formative stage.

Dr. P. B. Desai thinks that the early contact of Jainism with the Tamil country dates from the 4th century B. C., as gathered from the Buddhist chronicles of Sri Lanka. He thinks that the growth of Jainism in this region has to be attributed to the two-fold missionary activities of the twin streams of Jaina teachers, one following from Andhra towards Sri Lanka and another proceeding from the Mysore region according to the wishes of Bhadrabahu and both joining hands for the propagation of the faith. This is not quite convincing. All that we can say is that by the 2nd century B. C. Jainism had appeared in the Tamil country, and also in Kerala which was then part of Tamilaham.

In the Sangam age some Jains were found in Tamilaham. For instance, Ulōchanār, a prolific poet, whose poems appear in the Puranānūru, Ahanānūru, Narrinai and Kuṇuntogai anthologies, was apparently a Jain, since his name seems to have been derived from 'Ulōch,' a Jaina religious ritual. A song of Avūr Mūlam Kīlar shows that there were religious disputations; the rival sects must have been Jainism and Buddhism. Two poets, Kaṇiyān Pūṇkunṛan and Pākkudukkai Nankāṇiyār were authors of two poems in the Puranānūru. They appear to have been Jains. It is notable that Kaṇiyār represent a class of astronomers in Kerala.

In due course, the Jains made valuable contribution to the development of Tamil literature. Some consider that the celebrated Tiruvalluvar and Ilaṅgō were Jains. It is believed that Mūnruṇaiyārayar, the author of Palamoḷi Nānūru, Kāriyaśān of Śraipañchamūlam, Kanimādaviyār of the

Elādi and Tiṇaimālai Nūṭraimpadu were Jains. The Nāladiyār, too, is considered to have been the work of some Jain savants.

The Maduraikkāñchi (lines 475-87) as well as the later Silappadikāram and Maṇimēkalai indicate that in all important centres in the Tamil country there were Jaina temples and Buddhist chaityas and monasteries in which monks lived and preached their tenets to those who cared for them.

The 4th century A.D. witnessed the descent of the Kaṭabhras from the north into Tamilaham. The Kaṭabhras were patrons of Jainism and Buddhism. Both these religions seem to have risen to prominence in the South from 4th to 7th century A.D.

In the age of the Pallavas Mahēndravarman I was a Jain at first. Among the Pāṇḍyas Kūn Pāṇḍya was a Jain in the beginning. In the age of the Pallavas and Pāṇḍyas, and particularly in the period of the Imperial Chōḷas there are inscriptional references to Paṭṭichandams. The Chōḷa inscriptions contain noteworthy references to Jain centres in the Tamil country; for example, the Udayēndiram Plates record that the Digambara Jains had an ancient Paṭṭichandam. Again, there was at Vēdal (in North Arcot District) a large Jain monastery. At Tirupparuṭṭikunṭam, a suburb of Kāñchī-puram, there is a famous Jain shrine to this day. Śirramūr, in South Arcot is even now the seat of the spiritual leader of the Tamil Jains. Hieuntsang who visited South India in A.D. 642, says that Buddhism was on the decline but remarks repeatedly that it had yielded to the Digambara Jains.

#### *Jainism in Kerala:*

In respect of Kerala it must be remembered that till about the 8th century A.D. Kerala formed a part of Tamilaham. Jain influence could not but have penetrated Kerala. Further

in Mysore and South Kanara on the one hand and in Tamil Nadu on the other, Jainism was popular. Moreover, Jainism had its stronghold in Western India including Gujarat. These suggest that Kerala could not have been exempt from Jain influence. It should not be forgotten that Jainism was a proselytising religion and that therefore the penetration of Jainism into Kerala was naturally to be expected.

In particular Kerala was a land of hills and caves, eminently fitted for cave dwellings, which had a particular glamour for the Jains. Kerala is a land of Kāvus. We have no positive proof of the followers of Bhadrabāhu having entered Kerala. But there is a possibility that either through Mysore or through Tamil Nādu Jains came to Kerala. However, we hear of few early Chera kings who were Jains. Elini was an exception. In other parts of South India there were Jain monarchs. Some of the kings patronised Jainism enthusiastically. From the 5th to the 12th century A. D. the various royal dynasties of the South, such as the Gangas, Kadambas, Chalukyas and Rashtrakutas, and even some Tamil kings patronised Jainism. But no Kerala monarch is known to have supported this religion.

Mr. Sreedhara Menon makes a statement that "it took a longer time for Āryanism, Buddhism and Jainism to penetrate into Kerala than into other parts of Peninsular India". The basis for this statement is not clear. In fact, the caves and caverns of Kerala have to be properly searched. The first Buddhist Vihara seems to have been built at Kodungallūr in the reign of Imayavaramban. (Mani : XXVIII, lines 103-25). Jains must have come at least about that time, if not earlier. Moreover, in many cases Jains might have been later absorbed by the Hindus. In fact the Departments of Archaeology and Sociology of the Universities in Kerala have to undertake systematic investigations.

Ilaṅgō Adigal, believed to have been a Jain prince and the author of the great epic Śilappadikāram, lived at Trikaṇā Matilakam and in those days the Matilakam was a famous centre of religions and learning<sup>2</sup>. The famous Matilakam temple<sup>3</sup> had several temples in its vicinity as subordinate places of worship. Perhaps early in the Christian era it was a Jain temple. Later it was transformed into a Hindu temple. The date of this change is not known. It is said that according to the Malayalam work 'Kōkasandēśam', Brahmins did not enter the temple of Matilakam even as late as 1400 A. D. because it was originally a Jain temple.

It is significant that the Muslims, the Christians, the Buddhists and the Jains each claim the last Perumāl to have embraced the tenets of his religion. The relevant fact to be remembered in this context is that Jainism must have been one of the religions which flourished in Kerala; and that provided scope for the tradition regarding his conversion to Jainism.

In Kaṇṇil, near Perumbāvūr, there is an old Jain shrine in a natural rock-cut cave. It seems to have been a centre of Jainism in the past. In this temple there were images of Pārvanātha, Mahāvira and Padmāvatī Dēvi (Pattini). The temple is today worshipped by Hindus as a Bhagavati temple and the pūjās are conducted by Nambūdiri Brahmins. It is notable, however, that Jains still continue to offer worship there under the belief that they are worshipping Jain and not Hindu gods. In this connection it is remarkable that there are many Bhagavati temples in Kerala as well as in the present Kanyakumari District. Probably they were all Jain shrines in the past. For example, the Bhagavati temple on a hill at Edakkal in central Kerala was in all likelihood a centre of Jainism in early days. It is significant that Bhagavati has been considered a household deity by the ruling family of Travancore. Every year the Maharaja used to visit the

family shrine at Tiruvarattukkavu in Arriṅgal and perform ceremonies.

It is believed by some that the Kūḍalmāṇikkam temple at Iriñjalakkuda, now believed to be dedicated to Bharata, Rama's brother, was once a Jain temple. In all likelihood the old Jain temple was dedicated to Bharatēśvara, whose statue is to be found at Śravaṇa Belgōla. It is an instance of Hindu assimilation of Jain shrines and deities, giving them a place in the Hindu pantheon. Bharatēśvara, the Jain deity was renamed as Bharata of the Hindus and thus the two classes of people were in a way appeased by the change.

In Kerala, Wynād was a notable centre of Jainism in early times. Mānantōḍdy, Ganapati Vaṭṭam and the neighbouring place in Wynād have relics of Jain shrines. It is said that in the Ālattūr taluk there was an old Jain temple with granite images of Pārsavanātha and Mahāvīra. There are two old Jain bastis at Bangra Manjēśvar in Kāsargōd taluk.

In the Kanyakumari District which abuts on the present Kerala State, there were several centres of Jainism. There is a Bhagavati shrine at Tiruchchāṇattumalai in the village of Chitaral. That temple seems to have been a place of Jaina worship till the 14th century. Even now it has the images of Pārsvanātha, Mahāvīra and other Tirthaṅkaras.

At Nagercoil there is the Nāgarāja temple which was unquestionably a Jain temple till the 16th century A. D. Bhūṭala Vīra Udayamārtānda (1516-35), the ruler of Vēṇād, donated lands to this temple. By 1589 it became transformed into the Nāgarāja temple and Pōṛgi brāhmaṇins from the Tuļu country have been appointed as priests of the temple. Thus Kerala and the adjoining regions had places of Jaina worship. As mentioned earlier, a thorough-going investigation into the vestiges of Jain relics is a desideratum.

Then arises the question as to what extent Kerala culture and the ways of life of the people and their beliefs have been influenced by Jainism. Mr. Sridhara Menon's statement is too sweeping when he says that "Jainism has not left any lasting impress on Kerala culture." This is untenable. Kerala culture like the rest of Indian culture is largely an amalgam or the cumulative product of several forces and elements. In certain elements the Jain influence is also discernible. Both by example and precept monks and nuns in their monastic retreats influenced the lives of the people. Though we do not hear of many monasteries in Kerala, some might have flourished. Among such monastic centres were Chitalal or Tiruchchāṇḍagumalai of old South Travancore. The present Hindu religion and its patterns of worship have been influenced by the Jaina system. Let us examine these:—

1. The worship of Aiyappan in Kerala (Aiyanār in Tamilnādu) otherwise known as Hariharaputra is ascribable to both Buddhism and Jainism at the outset. This deity is worshipped in Jaina temples as a subordinate deity. As Seen Venkatasami points out in his book "Samaṇam Tamīlum" this deity is called by the Jains as 'Brahma Yaksha' and 'Śattanār.' When some Jains were absorbed into the Hindu fold these gods were worshipped in Kerala as 'Aiyappa' and 'Sāstā'. The difference between the Śattanār of the Buddhists and Jains is that the Buddhist Aiyanār used the horse as his vechicle while the Jain Aiyanār had the elephant.

2. *Nāga or serpent worship:* We do not hear of serpent worship in the Saṅgam works. But subsequently it appeared in some parts of Tamilnādu and Kerala. In fact in Kerala it assumed wide popularity. Though the Hindus worship Ādiśēsha as the lord of the snakes and though the serpent is associated with Hindu deities like Śiva, Viṣhṇu and Muruga, it appears that the worship of snake commenced with the Jains. This is seen

from the case of the Nāgarāja temple which was a Jain temple, later absorbed by the Hindus. Among the sacred places of early Jains in the Tamil country, Nāgamalai near Madurai was a seat of Jaina hermits. Nāgapatṭinam in Tamilnādu probably owes its name to the Jains. In the inscriptions at Sravaṇa Belgōla, Nāgamadi Kāṇḍiyar is one of the devotees mentioned. Nāgalāpuram in Tamilnādu was a place of worship by the Jains; the sculpture of a Jain, probably of Mahāvīra was found. At Pēcchippallam, five sculptures of Jainas bear canopies of serpents. At the so-called Pañchapāṇḍavamalai there are Jain images shaded by five-hooded serpents. In Kerala snakes are worshipped in hills, valleys, beneath trees etc. It is probable that the worship of snakes became popular through Jain influence.

3. Bhagavati worship is popular in Kerala and Tamilnadu. As shown earlier, this deity was assimilated from the Jain pantheon.

4. *Yakshi, Yakshini*: Still more common was the worship of Yakshi, known also as Yakshini. Perhaps Yakshi was originally a village deity of the native Dravidians. The Jains in order to appeal to the masses raised her status and absorbed her into their pantheon. Later the Hindu assimilated the worship of Yakshi, under the name of Isakki, from the Jains. The Śilappadikāram speaks of a temple dedicated to the flower-eyed Iyakki, otherwise known as Yakshi. Among the Yakshis or Yakshiṇis, the reference is found to Ambikā, popular in Kerala too.

It is important to remember that an inscription in Tirumalai states that the images of Yaksha and Yakshi had been set up on the holy mountain of Arhat by Elini, a prince of the Chera family from Kerala.<sup>4</sup> When the image came under a state of repairs it was replaced by a later descendent of Elini. This is also known from an epigraph. This inscription may be dated in

11th Century A. D. These suggest that a few Chēra kings were also interested in Jainism. Like Śiva and Vishṇu temples, Jain shrines also held lands in absolute ownership and also enjoyed lands granted for festivals and for other specified services.

5. *The idea of the Bull* which is considered the vehicle of Śiva is in all probability borrowed from the Jains. It is known that the earliest Jain Tīrthaṅkara was Ṛishabha. In Jain temples the bull is represented below the Tīrthaṅkara as Ṛishabha. The Jains consider the bull as the embodiment of Dharma. The Hindus also share this belief. The sanctity attached to the bull was probably derived from the Jain belief.

6. *Manṭravādi*: In Kerala sorcery became popular ; several Manṭravādins who are Hindus were held in respect by the people. Who were responsible for the introduction of this institution of spells and charms ? It is notable in this connection that during the later phase of its history, Jainism passed more and more under the influence of Tāntricism. A beginning in this direction was made in the form of the Yakshi cult which developed into ceremonial worship of the deities like Jvālamālinī and Padmāvati beyond their natural set-up and culminated in their ritualistic invocation under mystical formularies. Several Jaina teachers claimed mastery over the occult lores of Manṭra Vidya and Tanṭra Vidya and took pride in styling themselves as Manṭravādins.

In this connection one thinks of the Kaṇiyans in Kerala. The Kaṇiyans are astronomers, astrologers and physicians by profession. They are proficient in Sanskrit, in mathematics and Āyurvēda. By virtue of their learning, they are known as Eluttachchans or fathers of letters. Were they Jains in early times ? Perhaps so. The bases for the suggestion are the following. Firstly, the word Kaṇiyān was in all probability derived from Gaṇi. It is known that leaders of Jaina monks

were known as *Ganis*.<sup>5</sup> (*South Indian Inscriptions*, Vol. II, No 4 and Vol. III No. 205). Secondly, as mentioned earlier, among the Tamil Saṅgam poets, Kaṇiyar Pūnkunṛan (*Puṇam* 192) and Pākkuḍukkai Nankāṇiyār (*Puṇam* 194) figure in the *Puṇanānūru*, and it is believed that they were Jains. Kaṇimēdaiyār, the author of Ēladi, and Kaṇi Pūnkunṛanār (*Narrinai* : 226) also appear to have been Jain poets. But the Kaniyāns of later days were not devotees of Ahimsa or champions of Vegetarianism.

There is a tradition that the ‘Ambalavāsikal’ of Kerala, like the Pishāradis and Vāriyar were once Jains. Having been once dwellers in Jain monasteries, they might have later become ‘Ambalavāsikal’ connected with Hindu temples. These questions of affiliations and past associations with the Jains deserve to be carefully studied by the sociologists and historians of Kerala.

7. Certain words like *Pallī* and *Pallikkūdam* denoting schools for teaching pupils are derived from the Jain vocabulary. It is well known that *Pallī* was the name of the religious establishments of the Jains. *Pallichchandam* lands referred to gifts of villages to Śiva or Vishnu temple or private individuals. Perhaps the origin of the name ‘*Pallichchandam*’ is traceable to the Jains. It is known that the monks of *Pallichchandams* and *basadis* generally managed Jaina temples through a committee. But even these are found mentioned in the Tamil, Kannada and Telugu regions, rather than in Kerala. It may be noted however that *Tirupalli-eulchchi* i.e., the awakening of the deity with music and song, burning of incense and singing of hymns are some of the features common in the Jaina, Vaishnava and Śaiva temples. The institution of school was intimately associated with a monastery or temple in early times; and Jain teachers were renowned for their learning and educational activities.

8. Is it possible that the word ‘Tirumēni’, the term of respect, is derived from the Jain usage? In Kalugumalai of the

Tirunelveli District there are some Jaina sculptures. The inscriptions below them end with the expression 'tirumēni' which means the 'sacred image'. Tirumēni is a form of respectful address very common in the Malayalam country. It is not unlikely that this was adopted in Malayalam and Tamil from the Jaina practice.

But the influence of a religion is not to be judged only by the temples. The influence it had on the conduct and outlook of the people is an important factor. In fact, Jainism, like Buddhism was essentially an ethical religion. The most important teaching of Jainism is Moksha-mārga (or the way to attain salvation). There are two courses of moral discipline or conduct according to Jaina ethics, one prescribed for the householder and the other for the homeless sanyasin. The path of righteousness, as noticed earlier, is said to consist of rātnatraya that is, a mixture of the three principles of right faith, right knowledge and right conduct. These are essential besides particularly ahimsa, for attaining salvation. Physical mortification and suffering was also another distinctive principle stressed by Jainism. It is notable that Jainism was otherwise known as Nirgranthism because it laid supreme emphasis on non-possession and on renunciation of the house. It also held that the conquest of the evil tendencies of attachment and hatred was the real end. All these basic principles were adopted in Kerala as well as in the rest of India.

One important fact regarding Jainism in Kerala is that though the Jains there adopted the fundamental doctrines of that faith, the devotee and thinkers in Kerala are not known to have produced any outstanding personality in the field of Jain philosophy or metaphysics, logic or theory of knowledge. Nor did Jainism witness as far as our knowledge goes, a remarkable development of devotees and supporters in Kerala as in the rest of India.

To the best of our knowledge, in the history of Kerala there was little contribution of the Jains to literature. Authors of works like Jīvaka Chintāmaṇi, Nīlakēśi, Nannūl, Yāpparūṅgala Virutti, Yāpparūṅgalakkārtikai and Nēminātam were all Tamil unless we take that till about the 14th century Malayalam was a part and parcel of Tamil literature. It is noteworthy that the patronage of Tamil and Kannada in South India contributed considerably to the development of these languages.

*Decline of Jainism:* Jainism, unlike Buddhism, lasted for a longer period in Kerala, too. It was not totally obliterated. For the most part it became absorbed and assimilated by Hinduism. This process of absorption seems to have begun about the 8th century A. D. and proceeded till the 14th century.

The Bhakti movement played its part in weakening Jainism from the 7th century A. D. True, the number of Nāyanmārs and Ālvārs was fewer in Kerala than in Tamil Nādu. But Chēramān Perumāl Nāyanār, Viṣalmiṇḍa Nāyanār and Kulasēkhara Ālvār made their own contribution towards the resuscitation of the Hindu faith.

The influence of Śaṅkarāchārya and his followers was felt and perhaps the most important force was the dominant part played by the Nambūdiris in the rejuvenation of Hinduism. The lead of the Nambūdiris and their ever-increasing influence on the Kerala rulers gave a fillip to the growth of orthodox Hinduism. Lastly, the conversions effected by the Christians and Muslims had their own share of influence in the final overthrow of Jainism. But undoubtedly the bulk of the Jains came to be assimilated by Hinduism. In this context it must be remembered that in other parts of India, too, Jains have been absorbed by Hinduism. In the Tamil country, for example, the people known as the ‘*Nīru Pūśum Vellālar*’ were originally Jains and even now abstain from

food at night. In the Ramnad District there live a group of people known as the ‘*Mañchupputtūr Chettigal*’. They are now Saivites. But every Friday they offer worship for the Jain deity known as ‘Amaṇasvāmy’, housed on the outskirts of the Śiva temple at Ilayānkudi. They consider ‘Amaṇasvāmy’ as their ancestral family deity. There were Jain Brahmins in Tamil and Kannada regions but we do not hear of them in Kerala.

## N O T E S

1. The Svētāmbara Jains believe that Vardhamāna had married and had a daughter. The Digambaras deny this. The Digambara view is accepted by most scholars.
  2. When was Trikaṇā Matilakam built and when did Ilaṅgō compose his epic there ? These have roused an acute controversy. The traditional view that the S'īlapadikāram was composed in the 2nd Century A.D. is challenged. Dr. M. G. S. Narayanan of the Calicut University read the first line of Puthaḍi inscription as "one hundred and thirty seventh year of Tirukkappaṇavāy Temple." Sri K. G. Krishnan of the Epigraphical Survey of India had read it as one hundred and fifty seventh year. This is a minor difference. More serious is the view of Sri Krishnan that Tirukkuṇavāy might have been in Ālattūr. He contends that the Sandeśākāvyas of Kerala indicate that the presiding deity identified with modern Tirukkaṇamatilakam was Śiva. Dr. M.G.S. Narayanan's contention that the temple of Tirukkappaṇavāy must have been built in the 8th century and that the epic was written about that time cannot be accepted. The epigraphists do not identify Tirukkaṇavāy with Kuṇavāyir Kōttam. It is difficult to hazard a conclusion on this question now and hence the date of the epic still remains unsettled.
  3. The orthodox Jain creed did not believe in God. How then did Jain temples arise and continue in Kerala and elsewhere for a long time ? The Jain temples probably had only the images of Pārśvanātha, Mahāvira and other Tīrthaṅkaras.
  4. Ep. Indica VI, pp. 331 ff.
  5. South Indian Inscriptions, Vol. II. No. 4 and Vol. III, No. 205.
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## VIII. The Brāhmī Inscriptions of South India and the Śāngam Age

The Brāhmī inscriptions which were discovered in the Madurai and Tirunelveli districts early in the century<sup>1</sup> have continued to baffle students of Indian history. Mean while, in 1945, the excavations at Arikāmēdu have revealed, amidst other interesting material, twenty pot-shreds bearing graffiti which present short inscriptions. In respect of script and language the graffiti show a marked resemblance to the fifty epigraphs of the Madurai and Tirunelveli districts mentioned above.<sup>2</sup> Several attempts have been made to determine the script and language as well as the contents and significance of these inscriptions.

It is indisputable that the characters employed in all those epigraphs are Brāhmī, paleographically assigned to about the 3rd century B.C. The script resembles in a large measure that of the Bhaṭṭiprōlu casket inscriptions, the celebrated Asōkan epigraphs and the early inscriptions of Śri Laṅkā. Nevertheless, there appear certain notable differences, too. For instance, the symbol taken to represent ḍa is peculiar to the South Indian Brāhmī inscriptions. The symbol for ḥa, which occurs several times here, is totally absent in the Northern Brāhmī epigraphs. The formation of 'ma' in the southern records, as a loop with a cross bar, is markedly different from that found in the Asōkan and Bhaṭṭiprōlu inscriptions. The differences have led certain archaeologists to suggest that the script of the Arikāmēdu graffiti as well as that of the inscriptions lower down in the south belonged to the Drāvidī or Dāmilī pattern, as distinct from the

North Indian Brāhmī of the Aśōkan type.<sup>3</sup> In the Drāviḍī or Dāmilī distinctive Tamil letters like ḥa (ஃ), ḥa (ஃ), ḥa (ஃ) and na (ஃ) appear.

It has also been suggested that the Drāviḍī form of Brāhmī is the immediate ancestor of Vaṭṭeluttu, which preceded the modern Tamil scripts. This view, propounded by Dr. Buhler, was opposed by Dr. Haraprasada Sastri who thought that Vaṭṭeluttu developed from Kharōshṭī.<sup>4</sup> But it must be observed that Kharōshṭī, unlike Brāhmī, has almost similar symbols for several letters, has fewer loops and is written from right to left. Vaṭṭeluttu has decidedly more features in common with Brāhmī than with Kharōshṭī and this seems to confirm the view that it was an adaptation of Brāhmī.<sup>5</sup> Vaṭṭeluttu was common in South India till about A.D. 1000 after which, too, for several centuries, it was continued in the Malayalam country.

On the question of the language of the South Indian Brāhmī inscription the views of experts vary. Mr. H. Krishna Sastri struggled hard at the identification of the language of these records, and while indicating the numerous derivations from Tamil on the one hand and the several words which were entirely unidentifiable on the other, suggested the view that the language was Early Tamil with an admixture of Prākṛit words.<sup>6</sup> Less circumspect was Mr. K. V. Subrahmania Aiyar who categorically pronounced the language of the inscriptions as Old Tamil. Frequently he was obliged to resort to wild conjectures for the purpose of reading Tamil words into the available material.<sup>7</sup>

The variations in their respective readings too, are striking. For example, what is accepted as 'je' in the Ānamalai inscription by Mr. Sastri is taken as 'ku' by Mr. Aiyar. What Mr Sastri reads as 'jam' in the Tirupparamkunṭam epigraph is

read by Mr. Aiyar as ‘la’ and so on. Certain words, too, have been translated differently by these two writers. Some translations are palpably wrong, while certain others do not convey any sense whatever.<sup>8</sup>

Dr. C. Narayana Rao, rejecting for the most part the readings of the two above-mentioned epigraphists provides his own, and concludes that the language of the records is the Paiśācī form of Prākṛit.<sup>9</sup> Arguing that all the contemporary Brāhmī inscriptions are in Prākṛit, he attempts to furnish a Prākṛit derivation to the entire body of epigraphs. For instance, the words ‘Koṭupitavān,’ ‘koṭupitōn’ ‘kuṭupitā,’ ‘koṭupitān’ and ‘kuṭupitvan’ occurring in the Kongarpulitaṅguḷam, Ārīṭṭāpaṭṭi, Murugāltalai, Uṇḍāṅkal and Añgarmalai inscriptions respectively, are all construed by him to have emanated from the Pāli root ‘Koṭtēti,’ while the other writers derive it from the Tamil word ‘Koṭu,’ or ‘Kuṭu’ meaning ‘to cut.’ A Tamil inscription of Narasimhavarman Pallavamalla has employed the term in this sense,<sup>10</sup> and it seems that the Tamil origin is correct. Nor is Dr. Rao’s attempt to trace ‘Nāḍu’ to a Sanskrit origin from the root ‘Naṭ,’ meaning to ‘wander’ convincing. Again, such words as ‘Uḍaiyu,’ probably akin to ‘uḍaiyān,’ ‘ēri’ meaning a tank, ‘tantai’ meaning father, ‘Makan’ meaning son, ‘ūra,’ meaning village, are apparently Tamil words. While Mr. Subrahmania Aiyar’s venture to connect ‘Ven’ with Vēṇāḍ is far-fetched, we may well accept that the word ‘Veṇ’ occurring in some of the inscriptions and derived from ‘Vēl,’ signified a local chief.<sup>11</sup> On the whole, Dr. Rao’s position is as untenable as that taken by Mr. Aiyar. Assuredly, Dr. Rao’s approval of the view that the prevailing language in the Pāṇḍya country of the 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C. was Paiśācī is as startling as it is unsound.<sup>12</sup>

The legitimate inference seems to be that these votive inscriptions are in a hybrid language containing Tamil as well as Prākṛit words. If certain words mentioned earlier are Tamil, others like ‘pāli,’ ‘upāchā’ ‘chēiya’ and ‘lēnā’ are Prākṛit. The explanation for this strange feature is not far to seek. Buddhist devotees, soaked in Prākṛit, the classical language of Buddhism, attempted to have (Prākṛit) epigraphs inscribed in a manner that could be understood by the people of the region. That accounts for the strange jumble of words belonging to two different languages. The verbal forms, wherever they can be made out, seem to be in archaic Tamil, but it must be remembered that, for the most part, the inscriptions are content with recording the names of those who had the caverns excavated. It is of supreme importance, therefore, to remember that these epigraphs are not of great value to the study of linguistic development. Arikāmēdu graffiti have a more pronounced leaning towards Tamil, though they too are not Tamil inscriptions, pure and simple; there are several Prākṛit words there too.

It is an indubitable fact that the South Indian Brāhmī epigraphs are all associated with the Buddhists. The mountain caverns called Pañchapāṇḍavarmalai which present the Brāhmī inscriptions are located in almost inaccessible heights of mountain slopes, while others are found in out-of-the-way places and still others in the interior of woods. Pañchapaṇḍavarmalai probably acquired its name from Pāṇḍavapabbata, associated with the Buddha's name. Again Kalugumalai, where some of these caverns are found, is the Tamil equivalent for Gridharkūṭa, or the ‘Vulture Peak,’ intimately connected with the Buddha's career. Circumstantial evidences show that they were the abodes of Buddhist monks; in particular, the caverns which provide beds with raised elevations for

resting the head, resemble the numerous Buddhist monuments of Sri Lanka, containing similar inscriptions.<sup>13</sup> Little wonder, therefore, that the inscriptions are dominated by the Prākṛit element, though the authors of these records seem to have struggled hard at making themselves understood by the people of the locality.<sup>14</sup> In these circumstances it is extremely problematic to hold that the languages of these inscriptions are truly representative of the standard of the Tamil language. of that time.

Obviously the inferences attempted to be drawn by certain scholars regarding the history of the Tamil language on the basis of such doubtful hypotheses are venturesome, to say the least of it. For instance, depending exclusively on the questionable deductions derived from the above-mentioned Brāhmī inscriptions, Dr. N. P. Chakravarti has rushed to the conclusion that the language of the Śaṅgam literature cannot be dated earlier than 500 A.D., for, he contends that several centuries should have intervened before the ‘crude Tamil of the Brāhmī inscriptions’ attained the pattern of Śaṅgam classics.<sup>15</sup>

Such a deduction hardly fits in with the known chronology of the literary development of Tamil. In the first place, it is now proved that Tirujñānasambandar lived about the middle of the 7th century A.D. and that Tirunāvukkaraśar was contemporaneous with him. A considerable span of time must have doubtless intervened between the Śaṅgam Tamil and Dēvāram Tamil. The syntax and vocabulary of the language of these two epochs appear markedly different. The Dēvāram hymns are nothing, if not simple, direct and popular invocations, while the Śaṅgam classics are conspicuously archaic and terse.

Nor do the religious and social conditions revealed by the literature of these two epochs show similarity. The gods mentioned, as well as the rituals and ceremonies adopted,

show a pronouncedly different set up. For example, Māyōñ of the Śaṅgam age became Kṛishṇa or Vishṇu, and Sēyōñ coalesced with Subrahmaṇia, while Varuṇa and Indra practically disappeared from the pantheon. The acrimonious rivalry between Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism which is a dominant feature of the Dēvāram period has no parallel in the Śaṅgam epoch. Meat and liquor, so popular in the Śaṅgam age, are despised in the era of the hymns.

Assuredly none can think of assigning the Śaṅgam literature posterior to the Dēvāram hymns.<sup>16</sup> For one thing there is positive reference in Dēvāram to the Śaṅgam.<sup>17</sup> Besides, Tirunāvukkaraśar speaks of Pāri of old as the paragon of generosity who is none other than the celebrated Pāri immortalised in the Śaṅgam literature by Kapilar. The same hymnist refers in a song to Lord Śiva's helping a destitute poet, Tarumi, to gain a purse of gold in the 'Śaṅgam.'<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, those who are inclined to assign the Śaṅgam works to a period later than the 2nd or 3rd century A.D. fail to explain the significant absence of reference to the Pallavas in those classics. Frequently the Mūvēndar are specified as the great monarchs of Tamilakam and several minor chiefs are mentioned as well; no plausible reason exists for the omission of the Pallavas if they flourished about that time within the traditional limits of Tamilakam. The poets and pāṇar of the Śaṅgam age, who were always in quest of royal patrons could be reasonably expected to have made direct or indirect reference to the Pallavas, if they reigned at Kāñchi in the same epoch. On the other hand, the Perumbāṇārruppādai speaks of Tonḍaimān Ilantiraiyan who ruled at Kāñchipuram in the pre-Pallava period. (The suggested contemporaneity of Trilōchana Pallava of the Dekkān, Vijayāditya Chālūkya and Karikāla Chōla is entirely based upon legends which have been incorporated in the late inscriptions

of the 11th and 12th centuries A.D.) Nor could the Śaṅgam poems on the royal patrons have appeared during the period of chaos caused by the Kalabhra invasions of the Tamil Nādu about the 5th century A.D. The recent attempts to question the historical validity of the Kalabhra invasions are hardly convincing.

Above all, the data provided by the early Greek geographers confirm in a remarkable measure the details found in the Tamil classics and thereby help the determination of their date. There are several references to 'Yavanās' in the Śaṅgam works, and doubtless, the term denoted Greeks in the first instance.<sup>19</sup> Later, the Romans, Arabs, and all foreigners were called by the same name.

The Greeks, and following them, the Romans had come to South India as traders, and there arose several commercial settlements of Yavanās in the country.<sup>20</sup> A poem describes the prosperous port of Muśiri, whither the fine large ships of the Yavanās came bearing gold, making the water white with foam, and returned laden with pepper, along with the rare products of the sea and mountains given by the Chēra king.<sup>21</sup> Pepper became the 'Yavanapriya' or the spice dear to the Romans, and it is said that pepper formed more than half the cargo of many a west-bound Roman ship.<sup>22</sup> Pepper, as well as ginger, is mentioned in Graeco-Roman medicine even in the early half of the 1st century A.D.

The Yavanās are known to have been employed by South Indian monarchs for rendering certain kinds of service for which they were eminently qualified. There is a reference to Yavana guards at the palace of the Pāṇḍyan king Āryappaḍai-kadanda Nedūnceliyan<sup>23</sup> while Roman soldiers are known to have been enlisted in the fighting forces of several Pāṇḍyan kings. The Padiruppattu mentions a conflict between the

Yavanās and the Chēra king, Imayavaramban Neđuñjēralātan<sup>24</sup> as a result of which the Yavanās were vanquished and imprisoned, though the cause of the rupture remains a mystery. A song in Mullaippāṭṭu depicts the personal appearance of the Yavanās, their distinctive habits as well as their amazing skill in certain arts and crafts. It adds that their spoken language having been unintelligible to the Tamils, the Yavanās were obliged to employ gestures in order to make themselves understood.<sup>25</sup> The astounding skill displayed by the Yavanās in making artistic lamps of brass is adverted to more than once.<sup>26</sup> The Puṇanānūru speaks of the importation of delicious wine which was eagerly sought for by kings and courtiers.<sup>27</sup>

The significance of this literary evidence lies in that it tallies remarkably with the date furnished by the Greek writers of the early centuries of the Christian Era, thereby yielding testimony to the chronology of the Śaṅgam. Pliny describes India of the time of Augustus.<sup>28</sup> The author of the Periplus, who wrote in the latter half of the first century A.D. describes the conditions of that period, while Ptolemy, the last of the great geographers, who lived about 150 A.D. speaks of India of the 2nd century A.D. Thus it is not extravagant to suppose that it was the Greek description of the commerce of the 1st two centuries A.D. which was reflected in the Śaṅgam Classics.

Moreover, the hoards of Roman coins unearthed in South India indicate the period when the Roman commerce reached its height.<sup>29</sup> By far the largest number of the coins belongs to Augustus and Tiberius.<sup>30</sup> The references in Roman sources to the two embassies received by Augustus from the Pāṇḍyan king<sup>31</sup> and to a temple of Augustus at Muziris<sup>32</sup> tend to confirm the evidence of coins.

In this context the chronological datum furnished by the Arikāmēdu inscriptions is illuminating. The excavations have revealed that Arikāmēdu was not only an ancient town and port, evidently identifiable with the 'Poduke' of Ptolemy but also a centre of trade with the Graeco-Roman world. The unique value of the discoveries lies in that they enable us to date the culture of the region almost precisely. On the basis of internal and external evidence, Dr. Mortimer Wheeler concludes that the pottery and the Arretine ware and amphorae, imported from Italy, can be dated to 20–50 A.D. He states: "From a convergence of evidence it is here inferred that the sites were first occupied at the end of the 1st century B.C., or beginning of the 1st century A.D. with an inclination towards the later date."<sup>33</sup> Sometime in the 2nd century A.D. the warehouse in Arikāmēdu appears to have been deserted, and therefore, the glorious epoch of Arikāmēdu's industrial and commercial activity ranged about the 1st two centuries of the Christian era. Thus the testimony provided by Arikāmēdu accords well with the evidence furnished by the Greek writers on the one hand, and by the Śaṅgam Classics on the other. Thereby it reinforces the case for ascribing the Śaṅgam works to about the early centuries of the Christian era, postulated on the basis of the Gajabāhu Śenigutuvan synchronism.

Consequently the inference is inescapable that the Brāhmī inscriptions of South India of c. 3rd century B.C. to 1st century A.D. cannot be taken to represent the contemporary language, and that it is clearly unhistoric to post-date the the Classics on the basis of these strange records.

The attempt of the reputed linguist to distinguish three stages in the evolution of Tamil, viz., the Primitive Dravidian, Ancient Tamil and Śentamil and to equate Ancient Tamil with the language of the early Brāhmī inscriptions of South

India seems a misdirected one.<sup>34</sup> His suggestion that originals of the Śaṅgam Classics were composed in the Ancient Tamil of the early Christian era and that the language changed later into Śentamil in which they were written in the 7th century A.D. is at once interesting and ingenious. But until it is proved that the inscriptions truly represent the then prevalent Tamil language, the line of approach adopted by the learned writer seems unwarranted.

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## N O T E S

1. Annual Report on South Indian Epigraphy for 1912, Plate facing p.57.  
Idem for 1915—Pl. facing p. 96 and idem for 1918, Pl. facing p. 7.
2. Ancient India, No. 2. p. 109.  
Now about 80 Brāhma inscriptions have been discovered on the whole.
3. Dr. Buhler postulated the view that sometime prior to the 5th century B.C. the Dravidian script branched itself off from the main stock of Brāhma which was Semitic in origin, and developed certain peculiarities. (Buhler: Indian Paleography, Appendix 8). But Edward Thomas, Cunningham and Dowson held that the Brāhma script itself was of Dravidian origin and that the northern type is the offshoot of the original. Cunningham in particular believed that Brāhma was derived from a lost pictographic source. Prof. Langden detected the influence of the Mohenjodārō and Hārappā script on Brāhma, and this view has been strengthened by the findings of Dr. G. R. Hunter. (See G. R. Hunter: "The Script of Hārappā and Mohenjodārō and its connection with other Scripts," pp. 17, 22 and 49.) If the Dravidians were connected with the Indus Valley culture, as appears to have been the case, the Dravidian origin of Brāhma is plausible. See also 'Ancient India' No. 9 (1953) p. 215.
4. Bihar Orissa Research Society Journal, Vol. p. 58.
5. Buhler: *Indian Palaeography*, p. 73 Contra: *Elements of South Indian Palaeography*, p. 49. Dr. Burnell imagines on grounds, which are uncertain, that the Tamils adopted Vaṭṭeluttu from the Phoenician script. T. A. G. Rao demonstrates the affinity of Vaṭṭeluttu to Brāhma. See TAS. Vol. I, p. 284.
6. Proceedings of the First All India Oriental Conference, pp. 327-48.
7. Proceedings of the Third All India Oriental Conference, pp. 275-300.
8. For e.g. 'Potatan' in the Kongarpuliyaṅgulam inscriptions is taken to mean 'one belonging to.' Again 'Kaviy' in the Muttuppaṭṭi inscription is conjectured to be either a proper name or a cave.
9. *The New Indian Antiquary*, Vol. I, pp. 362-76.
10. *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. IV, p. 137.

11. The *Uṇḍākal* inscriptions clearly suggest this.
12. An attempt to trace the roots of certain Dravidian words to *Paiśāci* made by K. Amrita Rao seems to be more ingenious than convincing. See "The Dravidian Affinities of the Paiśāca Languages of North-Western Asia" in Sir Asutosh Mookherjee Silver Jubilee Volume III. Orientalia, Part 2, pp. 427-32. Prof. K. A. N. Sastri's suggestion that the language of the *Arikāmēdu* inscription is 'Monumental Prākrit' similar to the pattern mentioned in 'Monuments of Sāñchi.' Vol. I. p. 280, does not explain the presence of Tamil words. See Madras University Journal. Vol. XIV, pp. 3-4.
13. *Arikāmēdu* itself appears to have been a Buddhist centre. Not far removed from the Roman warehouse at *Arikāmēdu* lies the Kakkayan tope, where a stone image of the Buddha has been discovered.
14. That the Buddhists tried to have their inscriptions engraved in a manner suited to the locality may be seen from the following examples: (a) an epigraph at *Mauiggun* in Burma, comprising quotations from Pāli Buddhist scriptures written in characters which resemble the class of South Indian alphabets (*Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. V, pp. 101-2); (b) another on a stūpa at *Khin-bha-gon* in Burma in *Pyu* and *Pali* engraved in the early Telugu-Canarese script of South India (Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report, 1926-7, pp. 171 ff) and (c) another at *Kyundawzu* in old Prome containing the formula of Vinaya and *Sutta Pitaka* engraved in the same early South Indian script (Idem, 1928-9, p. 109). Apparently this script was in vogue there among the South Indian colonists.
15. Presidential address delivered at the All India Historical Congress held at Ahmedabad in December 1954.
16. Not even Mr. S. Vaiyapuri Pillai, who has ascribed the *Śilappadikāram* to the 8th or 9th century A.D. on grounds which are unconvincing, has assigned the Sangam classics to the post-Dēvāram period.
17. *Tiruttēvūr Dēvāram*, ii, 10.
18. *Tiruputtūr Tiruttāṇḍagam*, ii, line 2. Tirumangai Alvar, who lived in the 8th century, if not earlier, has spoken of 'Saṅgamukattamī' or the high standard of Tamil brought into vogue by the Saṅgam (Periya Tirumoli iii-4-10).

19. In North India, too, they were known as Yavanās. Patanjali refers to the Greeks as Yavanās in his Mahābhāshyam.
20. *Silappadikāram*, V. 9—10.
21. Ahanānūru, 149: *Puṣanānūru*, 343. Compare these data with the accounts of Greek geographers.
22. E. H. Warmington: ‘The Commerce between the Roman Empire and India,’ p. 182.
23. *Silappadikāram*, XIV. 62—7.
24. *Padiguppattu*: 2nd Deed.
25. *Mullaippāṭṭu*, 59-66.
26. *Perumbāṇaṭṭupadai*, 316; *Neṭunaivalvāḍai*, 101-3.
27. *Puṣanānūru*, 56.
28. Pliny, *Natural History*, VI, 142-62.
29. See map showing the distribution of Roman coins, fig. 48, *Ancient India*, No. 2, p. 117.
30. R. Sewell: ‘Roman coins found in India,’ JRAS., 1904, pp. 200 ff. H. G. Rawlinson: ‘Intercourse between India and the Western World,’ pp. 120-1. E. H. Warmington: ‘The Commerce between the Roman Empire and India,’ pp. 286-95. The author, in his critical review, agrees with Chwostow who explains the scarcity of Roman coins in Tamil Nāḍu subsequent to the time of Tiberius by the circumstance that, learning of the popularity of the earlier pattern in South India, the later emperors reissued coins of Augustus and Tiberius, but adds that after the 2nd century A. D. Romans traded more with the north-west districts of India than with the Tamil States.
31. Starbo: Geography XV, 4 and 73.
32. The Peutingerian Tables.
33. *Ancient India*, op. cit. p. 24.
34. See Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji’s article on ‘Old Tamil, Ancient Tamil and Primitive Dravidian’ reproduced in *Tamil Culture*, Vol. V, 1956.

## IX. Narrinai in its Historical Setting

It is the view of several scholars that the Tamil classics of old remain to be studied critically from the standpoint of history. Not long ago, Dr. A. L. Basham, formerly Professor of Indian and South Asian histories in the University of London, rightly observed that the Śāngam classics in Tamil have not been yet subjected to a critical investigation from the historical point of view.<sup>1</sup> While the world of Tamil scholarship owes an inestimable debt of gratitude to the service rendered by Mahāmahōpādhyāya Dr. U. V. Swaminatha Aiyar in editing and annotating many of these hidden treasures of literature, it has to be remembered that his was but a pioneer effort in the field. Moreover, in addition to examining the literary characteristics of these works, it is essential that systematic investigations are made into the light that they throw on the life and culture of the people in the past.

There are, however, two kinds of pitfalls which beset adventures of this kind. One is a mis-directed chauvinism which prompts an unwarranted glorification of the past. Actuated by this motive, legends and fables, fanciful pen-pictures and imaginative descriptions of poets, as well as certain unjustifiable deductions of talented commentators have been frequently pressed into service and made to play the role of history. As a consequence, the dividing line between literature and history has often become narrowed down. A second feature which has recently appeared is an excessive scepticism, resulting in a hyper-critical tendency to discard all ideas found in works of literature as valueless for the student of history. Neither of these extreme attitudes is acceptable. While

professedly historical works are conspicuous by their absence in south as well as in north India, a considerable amount of historical material can be indirectly gleaned from the vast mass of literary compositions of the past. Even ostensible adulations of kings and chieftains, of victories and endowments, interpreted in their proper light, yield some reliable data. But, by far the most valuable source is provided by the casual and indirect references in the literary works. Particularly in respect of social and cultural history, the light shed by them is of inestimable value. In fact, the more casual the reference in the Śāṅgam classics, the more reliable it becomes as a source of history; its value for the re-construction of history is next in importance only to what has been known as evidence from the hostile camp.

*Narrinai* forms one of the eight anthologies (*Eṭṭuttagai*), which constitute a part of what are called the Śāṅgam classics. It has been held by certain writers that the name ‘*Narrinai*,’ given to this anthology indicates its superior excellence. The adjective ‘Nal’ in the name of the work has been interpreted to mean that this collection of poems expounds the ideal features of the Tiṇais or regions.<sup>2</sup> But it is doubtful whether much can be read into the name. Nor does the circumstance that in an old verse which catalogues the eight anthologies, *Narrinai* figures at the outset, by itself, indicate any superiority of this over the other collections of the *Eṭṭuttagai*.<sup>3</sup>

The date when the stanzas incorporated in *Narrinai* were composed cannot be determined definitely. But this work, like certain other classics of the so-called Third Śāṅgam, is assignable to the period ranging from the 1st to the 3rd century A.D.<sup>4</sup> Though doubts have been expressed regarding the date of this Śāṅgam, reliable pieces of evidence support the theory which ascribes it to the early centuries of the Christian era. The discovery in South India of Roman

coins, particularly of those belonging to the time of Emperor Augustus, the confirmation of the fact of active commercial contact between Rome and South India provided by the recent finds at Arikamēdu and, above all, the striking affinity between the descriptions of this commerce found in the Śaṅgam works and the accounts furnished by the Greek visitors to India during the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D. make it clear that the Śaṅgam classics belonged to this period. However, the legends connected with the Śaṅgam which call for a belief in the super-natural agency are obviously unhistorical. On the other hand, the contention that the tell-tale word ‘Śaṅgam’ shows its late origin after Sanskrit had taken root in Tamilaham is beside the point. In the first place Sanskrit had found its way into Tamilaham before the 3rd century A.D. and secondly the academy appears to have had indigenous names viz., Kūḍal and Avai, at the outset. This is evident from the Prologue to Tolkāppiyam, where it is stated that the work was presented to and accepted by the ‘Avai’ or the assembly of Nilantaru Tiruvir Pāṇḍyan.’

Some scholars think that the Tamil Śaṅgam was organized on the model and in imitation of the ‘Drāviḍa Saṅgha’ established by the Jain Vajra Nandi in 470 A.D. The natural order of expectation indicates the reverse of this. Vajra Nandi’s move might well have been prompted by the desire to create a rival for the Hindu organisation already in existence. It is significant to remember in this connection that in later days Jains and Buddhists in South India adopted the phraseology of the Tamil Śaiva saints to express their own religious ideas. For instance, in Śilappadikāram and Chintāmaṇi, the God of the Jains and the conception of salvation are described in terms of the Śaivite religion. In these works Aruhan the Jain God is called ‘Śiva Paramūrti,’ while the state of ultimate bliss is described as ‘Śivagati.’

Moreover, the reference of saint Tirunāvukkaraśar in the 7th century A.D. to the Śaṅgam as an established institution of poets shows that it had acquired a standing before his time.<sup>5</sup> Whether there existed from the beginning of the so-called Śaṅgam age a full-fledged academy of poets or a board of censors is a matter open to doubt. The probability is that the wandering bards of the entire Tamil country met at Madurai on certain festive occasions and recited the poems composed by them. Madurai, the Pāṇḍyan Capital appears to have been a seat of Tamil learning under royal patronage. The poets attached to the court of the Pāṇḍyan king at Madurai might have adjudged the merits of the poems presented by the bards from the different places. This expert body was in all probability the fore-runner of the later Tamil Śaṅgam. However, the difficulty in ascertaining the date and genesis of the institution called the Śaṅgam need not raise any doubt regarding the assignment of the early classics to the opening centuries of the Christian era.

Though the verses embodied in *Narrinai* were composed before the 3rd century A.D. it is not known when they were collected and edited. Literary tradition, bequeathed by the early commentators, is that the anthology of *Narrinai* was prepared under the direction of Pannādu Tanda Māran Vaṭuti. It is difficult to determine the reliability of this piece of tradition. Nor is it possible to determine the exact date of Pannādu Tanda Māran Vaṭuti's reign.

Internal evidence shows that one Bhāratam Pādiya Perundēvanār has affixed invocatory stanzas to five of the eight anthologies, viz., to *Narrinai*, *Ahananūru*, *Puṣanānūru*, *Kuṇtoggai* and *Aiṇkuṇūru*. But controversies regarding the identification of this Perundēvanār and his date have not so far led to a definite conclusion. While, therefore, the determination of the identity and date of the scholar who compiled

the anthology and of the king who directed the compilation is not easy, the only chronological datum on which we can rely is that the stanzas incorporated in *Narrinai* were composed some time during the early centuries of the Christian era.

*Political History :*

*Narrinai* refers to several political personages and events. But they are not mentioned with a view to providing an account of the achievements of the rulers or a description of the political events which had occurred. More often than not, the references appear in a casual manner in order to illustrate the situations of love which the poets were describing. It had become almost a convention with the poets of that age to portray the feelings or reaction of lovers by instituting comparisons with prominent political occurrences. For the most part the political events and personalities mentioned by the poets appear to have been contemporaneous with them; but some pertained to men and happenings of an earlier date. The wide popularity which they had attained provided the temptation for the poets to import them into their comparisons so as to make the descriptions impressive and realistic.

However, it is undeniable that the references made were to real personages and events. This conclusion is reinforced by the circumstance that different poets of the same period or of different times refer to the same happenings and personalities. Nevertheless, there are limitations to the historical value of the poetic references which appear in the *Saṅgam* classics. Some poets were benefactors at the hands of monarchs and chieftains, and it is too much to expect that in describing events pertaining to their patrons, the poets would not have been influenced by personal bias. A few poets were clearly given to the lavish praise of their patrons. *Paranar*, for instance, was ostensibly swayed by the temptation to glorify his friends and exaggerate their achievements. A gifted poet, *Paranar* had the skill to

provide a realistic colour to the descriptions. But, reviewing the characteristics of the poets of that age as a class, it would seem that those who yielded to the temptation of providing interested versions were few and far between. Usually the poets of that epoch were remarkably frank and outspoken.

In respect of political history, the most serious, though inevitable, limitation is that no connected account of a ruler or dynasty can be pieced together from the stray references. Nevertheless, it cannot be claimed that even the available data have been fully explored and coordinated. In fact, a systematic study of the Śaṅgam classics from the standpoint of history is a desideratum. A final analysis of the data in conjunction with the determination of the contemporaneity of the poets of particular epochs may yield a basic framework out of a chaotic mass. Even a chronological system may be deduced. A bold attempt was made by the late Sri K. N. Sivaraja Pillai ; but, a pioneer in the field, he had to encounter formidable difficulties, as a result of which certain venturesome guesses had to be employed by him in order to fill up unbridgeable gaps. More limited in scope was the attempt made by the late Sri K. G. Sesha Aiyar, for he confined his attention primarily to the Chēra dynasty. Thanks to the Padiruppattu, a history of the Chēra Kingdom of the Śaṅgam age is in a way possible to be constructed, though there still exist many unsolved problems. More recently, the late Sri S. Vaiyapuri Pillai had made an effort at analysing the facts and fiction contained in early Tamil literature and evolving a chronological scheme. In some respects he has attempted to turn a new leaf in the critical study of Tamil literature. But, while almost all the earlier writers yielded to the temptation of exaggerating the antiquity of Tamil works, Sri Vaiyapuri Pillai seemed to take a subtle delight in proceeding to the other extreme. His attempt to fix the date of Śilappadikāram about the 11th century, for instance, seems to make a parody of the scientific method. Nor is consistency one of the merits of Sri

Vaiyapuri Pillai's conclusions. In respect of certain works of Tamil literature he has advanced different dates at different times. But it is easier to criticise than to construct. The important need is, as stated earlier, the undertaking of intensive studies of each of the classics from the historical point of view. A systematic attempt at examining the contemporaneity of kings on the one hand and of the poets on the other, and at correlating the events mentioned in the various classics, is bound to help the re-construction of early Tamil history.

The references found in *Narrinai* to the three great sovereigns of Tamilaham and their vassals may first be pieced together. It will be followed by an examination of the references to the independent chieftains who ruled in different parts in Tamilnād.

(A) *Chēra*: (1) *Udiyan Chēral*: Udiyan, the *Chēra* king is mentioned in stanza 113 of *Narrinai* for the purpose of instituting a comparison. When a loving girl in Pālai was informed by her lover that he had to set out in quest of wealth, she was alarmed, and because of her agony at the prospect of separation, she wept bitterly. The shrill wailing of the girl is compared by the poet to the Āmbal Paṇ or tune called Āmbal, played on the flute by the musicians of Udiyan on the field of battle. There is little to suggest that the reference to Udiyan Chēral has been imported in order to praise the *Chēra* monarch or his warlike activity. The comparison is introduced just for the purpose of indicating the nature of the wail. The identity of the king mentioned here is beyond dispute. It is true that no distinctive qualification of the name 'Udiyan' occurs in the stanza. But since we do not so far know of any Udiyan other than Udiyan Chēral, the famous Perunchōrutiyan Chēralātan, the reference is clearly to this monarch. Apparently the belief that he fed the belligerents in the Mahābhārata war is little more

than a legend, invented perhaps to depict the monarch's generosity.<sup>6</sup> It may be mentioned in passing that there is plausibility in the suggestion that this king was the hero of the first Decad of *Padiruppattu*.

Another Chēra king is Kuṭṭuvan, mentioned in stanza 105 of *Narrinai* as the owner of Kudavarai (Kuḍamalai), flowers from which adorned the tuft of a handsome girl. Apparently Kuṭṭuvan, the Chēra king, was a contemporary of the author of this stanza, for it would be out of the way to expect an earlier king to have been mentioned as the owner of the hill. The question arises as to which Kuṭṭuvan is meant in this stanza. Though Cheṅguṭṭuvan was the most famous Chēra sovereign, here it was probably Palyānai Chel-Kelu Kuṭṭuvan who has been thought of, for, in importing the name of the Chēra king to indicate the ownership of the hill, the poet might have had the object of referring to the monarch who had won it from the other. Palyānai Chel-Kelu Kuṭṭuvan, 'the possessor of battalions of elephants' was himself a warrior of note, and besides, it was his brother Imayavaramban Neḍuñchēralātan who had extended the dominions to the confines of the Āyirai mountains, situated to the north of the southern border of Tuḷunādu. Kuḍamalai, too, had come under his sway. It is probable that it was his brother Palyānai Chel-Kelu Kuṭṭuvan who has been referred to in the stanza, for the acquisition of the hill by his predecessor would have been fresh in the mind of the poet. No special significance could be attached to the mention of Kuḍamalai if Chēran Cheṅguṭṭuvan was intended to be specified. Moreover, Palyānai Chel-Kelu Kuṭṭuvan himself is stated to have conquered Umbarkādu (literally Forest of Elephants). Umbarkādu is probably the forest near the borderland of the modern Coimbatore District adjoining the Ānamalai Hills. Poet Pālai Gautamanar who eulogizes this king in *Padiruppattu*, gives him credit for having subjugated

the whole of Koṅgunāḍu. Is it possible that he was the conqueror of Kuḍavarai which lies to the north-west of Koṅgunāḍu? In these circumstances it does not seem venturesome to suggest that the reference to Kuṭṭuvan in stanza 105 of Narrinai is to Palyānai Chel-Kelu Kuṭṭuvan commemorating either his or his brother's victorious glory.

The mention of a king Kuṭṭuvan occurs also in stanza 395, in which a comparison is drawn between the sound of the roaring waves of the sea and the noise of the triumphant drums in the battle fought by Kuṭṭuvan. The reference to Kuṭṭuvan in this stanza seems to have been introduced deliberately in order to stress the victorious achievement of the Chēra monarch. Here, too, the full name is not given, and his identity has to be made out entirely from the circumstantial evidence furnished by the stanza. It may be argued that the reference to waves in the piece of comparison is more appropriate to Chēran Cheṅguṭṭuvan, the great hero of naval victories, as a result of which he earned the title of Kaḍalpiṛakkōṭṭiya Vēlkelu Kuṭṭuvan. The same stanza also compares the loving girl with Māndai, the flourishing coastal town. Does the mention of Māndai indicate connection with Chēran Cheṅguṭṭuvan, famous for his naval supremacy?" But, as against all these considerations, there stands the specific qualification provided for Kuṭṭuvan in the stanza. He is described as 'Kaḍambakaṭṭu Yānai Neduntēr Kuṭṭuvan,' in other words, as Kuṭṭuvan, the owner of mighty elephants and lofty chariots. Weighing the evidence, direct and indirect, it would seem that the reference is in all probability to Palyānai Chel-Kelu Kuṭṭuvan because of the clear allusion to the elephant force of the king.<sup>8</sup>

A Chēra monarch, believed to have been mentioned in stanza 18 of Narrinai, is Kaṇaikkāl Irumporai of Tonḍi. The lover is stated to have gone to the land of this Chēra

king in quest of wealth. In describing the land, the poet refers to the Chēra king's victory over the chieftain called Mūvan. The Chēra ruler defeated him in battle, and plucking his teeth, carried them to his capital and displayed them on the gates of his palace as a trophy of his victory.<sup>9a</sup> The reference to the king is made obviously in order to indicate the glory and natural wealth of the land to which the lover had betaken himself to acquire wealth. It was a land of hills and valleys, interspersed with perennial waterfalls. A waterfall near the camp where the large army of the Chēra king rested seemed to lull the soldiers to sleep by means of its melodious sound. It may be observed that the reference to the king's triumphant victory over Mūvan is not directly connected with the description of the land. Perhaps the desire on the part of the poet to praise the king's exploit was responsible for the inclusion of that reference in the stanza.

But the crucial question in respect of this reference is the identification of the Chēra king. The stanza in *Narrinai* merely speaks of the 'Tonḍipporunan Venvēl Teralarundānai pporaiyan.' Kaṇaikkāl is not mentioned, and it is the commentator, the late Sri Pinnattur Narayanaswami Aiyar who has identified the Poṛayan with Kaṇaikkāl Irumpoṛai. The learned commentator's basis for his deduction is apparently certain details found about one Poygaiyār, the author of *Kaṭavalī* who is taken to be the author of this stanza as well. The colophon at the end of *Kaṭavalī* speaks of a fight between Chōḷan Chengaṇṇan and Chēramān Kaṇaikkāl Irumpoṛai and adds that when the Chēra king was defeated and imprisoned, the poet Poygaiyār composed a poem in praise of the victor and got the Chēramān released. It must be observed that except in this colophon the name of Kaṇaikkāl Irumpoṛai is not mentioned anywhere else. Two questions emerge; one is the authenticity of the colophon. The colophon is untrustworthy since it is contradicted by the poem, where

stanza 39 states that the Chēra king was killed in battle. The other question is whether the author of Kaļavaļi is identical with the poet who composed stanza 18 of Narrīṇai. One Poygaiyār is the author of Puram 48 and 49; but his patron is said to have been one Chēramān Kōkkadaimārpan. On the whole, in the present state of our knowledge it is not possible to hold that the Poṛayan mentioned in stanza 18 of Narrīṇai is Kaṇaikkāl Irumpoṛai. In fact, several Poṛayans figure in the Śaṅgam literature, including Narrīṇai, but the identification of these rulers is by no means easy.

*Porayan :*

Stanzas 8 and 346 speak of one Poṛayan. In Stanza 8, the Poṛayan referred to, is described as the lord of Tonḍi. A loving girl wishes her suitor the same measure of high reputation which, Poṛayan, the master of large chariots, had won for himself. Tonḍi was originally the capital of Kuḍanādu, and after the capture of Kuḍanādu by the Chēras, a member of the ruling family reigned at Tonḍi. When Kuḍanādu was divided into Poṛainādu and Kuḍanādu for administrative purposes Tonḍi became the capital of Poṛainādu. It was apparently from the circumstance that the Chēras ruled over Poṛainādu that Poṛayan became one of the surnames of the Chēra ruler like ‘Kuṭuvan’ and ‘Koṅgan Poṛayan,’ mentioned in stanza 346 of Narrīṇai, are spoken of as the lord of Kollimalai. Perhaps the Poṛayans figuring in both the stanzas are identical, for Tonḍi was situated near Kollimalai. In both the stanzas the prosperity of the region is mentioned, but there is hardly any other detail which helps the identification of the ruler. Anduvan Chēral Irumpoṛai, the first, is stated to have been the founder of the Poṛayan branch of rulers at Tonḍi and as many as 18 kings of the line are mentioned. Which of these rulers figures in Narrīṇai it is not possible to determine.

### B. *Chōlas* :

The only Chōla king mentioned by name in Narrinai is Killivalavan, figuring in stanzas 14, 141 and 390. The reference to this monarch in stanza 14 does not redound to his credit, for here, the ill-repute that had befallen him is specified. It is stated that Killivalavan was disliked by the people because he had set fire to the capital of the Chērala after capturing his fort. These facts are mentioned in the stanza in order to show that a girl's lover had, by deserting her, incurred an odium even more serious than what had befallen Killivalavan on account of his unkind treatment of the Chērala. While this stanza is not flattering to the Chōla king, stanza 141 indirectly adverts to the prosperity and glory of the monarch. Here the lover's charming tuft is compared to the black soil in Ariśilār in Killivalavan's territory. Incidentally, the king's ambition, his mighty elephantry and array of chariots as well as his triumphant victories are mentioned.

In stanza 390, too, the king's military prowess is praised. But the reference is casual, since it is introduced for the purpose of stating that the leaves (Taṭai) worn as dress by the loving girl were gathered from the fields around Kōyil Veṇṇi, which belonged to this monarch. In the Śaṅgam literature, a Killivalavan who died at Kuṭamurram and another of the same name who died at Kurāppalli appear. In all probability, as Dr. G. U. Pope has suggested, the two kings are identical.<sup>95</sup> He was perhaps the son of Nalamkilli and grandson of Karikālan the Great, who was known also as Perum-tiru-Māvalavan or merely as Vaṭavan. Killivalavan's great military achievement was his decisive triumph over the Chēra. An enthusiastic patron of poets, he was himself a poet of some merit.

### Tittan :

Tittan, known as Virai Vēlmān Veļiyam figures in stanza 58 of Narrinai. His father, who was called Veļiyan Tittan,

was originally the chieftain of Virai. He attacked Urāiyūr which was then under Sēndan,<sup>10</sup> defeated and drove him out and established himself there. Veliyan Tittan was succeeded by his son Tittan Veļiyan, who figures in Narrinai. The poet adverts to his glory in the course of a comparison. One evening Veļiyan Tittan's victorious drums were sounded and conches were blown. In order to witness the gay celebrations the womenfolk of the adjoining villages thronged to the capital city. This desire to witness the celebrations is compared to the eagerness of a girl who wished to go and meet her lover in the evening.

The references to the Chōlas include a mention in stanza 400 of the assembly at Urāiyūr, which is praised for its unswerving adherence to right principles. A girl exhorts her lover to be as steady as the Urāiyūr assembly. The high reputation that the assembly of Urāiyūr had acquired is evident from this stanza.

#### *Chōla Chiefs :*

*Aliśi* : Certain chiefs who owed allegiance to the Chōla power are found mentioned in Narrinai. One of these was Aliśi who ruled over Arcot and its neighbourhood. Stanza 87 of Narrinai speaks of Aliśi as a member of the Chōla family ruling in Arcot. The poet compares the delight of a girl when she imagined that she met and embraced her lover with the joy of a person when he dreamt that he obtained the delicious gooseberries from the forest of Aliśi.

Stanza 390, too, describes Aliśi as the lord of Arcot, to which place the beauty of the beloved girl is compared. Aliśi was the proud possessor of beautiful chariots and of rich paddy fields in and around Arcot. Kuṇuntogai (Stanza 257) states that Aliśi captured Urāiyūr and ruled there. Apparently, this was a later achievement, for no evidence of this triumph is

found in *Narīṇai*. Stanza 190 of *Narīṇai* shows that Āliśi was the father of Sēndan, who was also a brave warrior. Sēndan, however, is known to have ruled only in Arcot. It appears, therefore, that Āliśi's sovereignty over Uraiyyūr was a short-lived affair. Arcot continued to be a part of the Chōla power, as is evident from stanza 227 which states that the Chōla banner was flying over the streets of Arcot.

*Anni* : A less powerful Chōla chief who ruled over a village near Tañjāvūr was Anni. Later, the village itself came to be called after him as Annikkudi. Stanza 180 states that Anni was engaged in a fierce conflict with one Periyān, perhaps a chieftain of Chōlanādu who ruled over Purandai, or Poriayāru,<sup>11</sup> over a laurel tree and it resulted in the death of Periyān. The stanza says that a woman, who was bemoaning her misery caused by her husband's partiality for a harlot, stated that her ill-will towards her lord could terminate only with her death just as the struggle between Anni and Periyān ended only with the death of one of the two in the battle field. The reference to the chieftains is casual occurring only by way of comparison and hence is quite trustworthy.<sup>12</sup>

A reference to the efficient rule of the Chōlas over all the villages of the kingdom appears in stanza 265 of *Narīṇai* sung by Paraṇar. A comparison is made of the beneficent rule of the Chōlas with the bountiful generosity of the lady lover. In passing, it may be mentioned that the same stanza compares the tuft of the lady with that of the peacock in the Kollimalai of Ōri. Stanza 227 is interesting, for it refers to the glory of the Chōla rule and the prosperity which flourished in Arcot. A comparison is made between the hum of bees around pots of toddy in the streets of Arcot and the uproar caused by the courtship of a girl with her lover.

The comparison seems rather far-fetched and inappropriate, though it portrays the increasing growth of the public scandal like the rising hum of bees around the pots of toddy.

Stanza 265 speaks of the beneficent rule of the Chōlas over Ārēru. It indicates the military prowess of Miñili, the heroic chieftain of the village, called Pāram, who defended it efficiently against all incursions by effectively employing his skill in archery. A comparison is made between the efficient rule of Miñili over Pāram and the Chōla administration of Ārēru (265). Incidentally the stanza refers to the practice of the Chōla kings wearing Āttimālai, the garland of Ātti flowers.

#### *The Pāṇḍyas:*

The Pāṇḍyan kings figuring in Narrinai are but a few, Talayālaṅgānattu Cheruvenṭa Neḍuncheḷiyan being the most prominent among them.<sup>13</sup> The glittering sword of this valiant hero was shining when taken out of its sheath. Therefore, when the battle began, this lustre of the sword, coupled with the volley of arrows which fell incessantly, made it impossible for the girl's lover to reach his destination and meet her. This is the explanation offered by the maid to her mistress for the delay of her lover.

The military prowess of Pāṇḍyan Māran Vaṭuti is described in stanza 150. His mighty army, which was assisted by a formidable elephantry, attacked and destroyed the fortifications of his enemies. It is added that the subordinate chieftains under his sway prayed for his long life so that they could enjoy his unfailing protection. Here we have one of the few instances of direct description of a king's prowess, though it is introduced in order to indicate the confidence of the girl that her lover would positively arrive, drawn by submissive horses.

A reference to the celebrated capital of the Pāṇḍyan king occurs in stanza 39, in which a comparison is made by the poet Marudan Ilanāganār between the flourishing city of Madurai and the broad shoulders of the lady love. Another and a more direct reference to the splendour of Madurai is found in stanza 298 which speaks of a girl's lover proceeding to that city in order to make his fortune. Incidentally, the Pāṇḍyan king, the lord of Madurai, is praised as the owner of a golden chariot. Stanza 379 speaks of the lofty peaks of the Podiyil Hills belonging to the Pāṇḍya sovereign. This suggests that the Pāṇḍyan king had captured these places from the contemporary Ay. It describes the ruddy eyes of the aggrieved girl-lover which seemed to recall the sight of the rain in Kudavāyil of the powerful Chōla king as well as her red fingers which resembled the flowers on the Podiyil Hills. The beauty of Marungūr, the village belonging to the Pāṇḍyan monarch, is compared in another stanza with the charming beauty of the girl lover.

#### *Independent Chieftains :*

Certain chiefs figure who were for the most part independent of external political control. They were frequently engaged in conflicts with each other and with one or the other of the three powerful monarchs of Tamilaham, viz., the Chēra, Chōla and Pāṇḍya. At times the chieftains were defeated by one or the other of the great powers and were consequently reduced to a position of subordination. But at the earliest opportunity the chieftains regained their independence, and entering into alliance with other rulers, succeeded in maintaining their independent position and thereby a balance of power among the rulers of Tamilaham.

*Ay Andiran :* One of the prominent chieftains mentioned in Nāgginai as well as in certain other classics of the Śāṅgam age

is Āy Andiran. His bountiful generosity is referred to in stanza 167, where it is stated that the sound arising from the chariots which were bestowed as gifts filled the entire atmosphere with a sense of plenitude and prosperity. The purpose of mentioning this fact is to indicate that the girl's hero was the lord of a harbour of similar prosperity. The abundance of the gifts given by him in charity is described also in stanza 237.<sup>14</sup> How known facts have been skilfully woven with incredible legends can be seen from Chiṛupāṇārrupadai (lines 95-99) where it is described how Āy Andiran procured a blue cloak from a serpent and bestowed it on Lord Śiva. The agony felt by Āy Andiran's subjects on account of his death is vividly depicted in Puranānūru (Stanzas 240 and 241). An interesting question has arisen regarding the genesis of his name, Andiran. Sri M. Raghava Aiyangar is inclined to think that Andiran is derived from 'Āndhra' and that he himself hailed from Āndhra Dēśa and also that he was probably a descendant of the Vēlir who are believed to have been brought down to the south by Agastya. Plausible as this may seem, it is pertinent to observe in this connection that invariably people belonging to the region immediately to the north of Tamilaham have been spoken of in classical Tamil literature as 'Vadugar.' Why a deviation should have occurred in this case it is difficult to explain.

*Kāri* : Kāri, or Malayamān Tirumudikkāri, as he was called, was another chief, highly reputed for his enthusiastic patronage of poets. His generosity and skill in war are mentioned in certain stanzas of Narrinai. He is known to have possessed a remarkable skill in the use of the bow and arrow. (Stanza 100). The tremendous noise produced by the music of the dancers who had come from distant lands seeking Kāri's patronage is compared with the heart-rending shock experienced by a man when his harlot threatened to divulge to his wife his lack of fidelity. The comparison, however, does not seem

to be appropriate, for the state of feeling on the part of the musicians is entirely at variance with that of the guilty person in question. Perhaps it is too much to expect comparisons to be applicable in respect of every detail. At any rate, in the numberless comparisons occurring in the early Tamil classics, invariably, one feature alone is sought to be compared. In stanza 170, a lady who was mortified to learn about her husband's illicit association with a harlot, wants the people of the village to rise to a man in the same manner as Kāri, collecting his entire force marched against the army of the Āryas and encountered them at Muṇūr. It may be observed in passing that Muṇūr was the capital of Malayamān Tirumudikkāri. When attacked by Kāri the Āryappadai was completely scattered.<sup>15</sup>

In stanza 291, too, the reference to Kāri is indirect, for it states that, on account of a man's attachment to a concubine his wife's position had been ruined in the same way as the enemy's forces were destroyed at Muṇūr by Kāri's army. Finally, stanza 320 speaks of one harlot complaining of another of having enticed her paramour; she wanted the entire people of the village to jeer the offender with their conjoint laughter which was to be as loud and effective as the uproar of Kāri's people when Āri attacked his territory.<sup>16</sup>

*Añji*: A chieftain called Añji became prominent in the Kongu country. Stanza 381 of *Narrinai* tells us that Añji who possessed a powerful force of elephants and cavalry used to bestow chariots liberally on poets. The abundant rain which fell and brought delight and prosperity to the people is compared to Añji's lavish grant of gifts. He is known as Adiyān because he belonged to a family of Adiyas in Chēranādu; but his personal name was Añji.<sup>17</sup> His capital was Tagadūr, situated on the hill of Kolikkūram. He fought

victorious battles against Peruñchēral Irumporai.<sup>18</sup> It was believed that Añji's ancestors had come from out-side and established their position at Tagadūr and that later he became lord of Kutiramalai.<sup>19</sup> Several other details about the activities of Añji are revealed by the Śaṅgam classics.<sup>20</sup>

*Aruman* : A petty chieftain who had not been brought under the authority of any superior power was Aruman. He is spoken of as the lord of Śirukudi in stanza 367 of Narrinai. Śirukudi, situated to the north of Kāviri, consisted of tiny houses erected on small posts. The place was, however, rich in natural resources. This stanza, which speaks of the girl lover as a native of this village, provides a direct reference to the ruler of the place. The suggestion of Sri Narayanaswami Aiyar that the girl is compared with Śirukudi, seems rather far-fetched; no feature of the village is comparable with the qualities of the girl.

*Vānan* : Another chieftain of Śirukudi figuring in this anthology 340 : 9 is Vānan. Here the girl's beautiful bangles are compared to the charming village of Śirukudi. In the course of his description of the abundance of the natural wealth of the place, the poet says that the vālai fish used to swim from the irrigation canals into the paddy fields and that even when beaten by the ploughmen it rushed to the bund and back, for it could not scale over it and get beyond. It may be observed in passing that the agriculturists of the village are believed to have ploughed the land efficiently, for the ploughmen are described as 'Cheñchāl Uļavar.'

*Periyan* : A chieftain, Periyan by name, figures in stanza 131 of Narrinai. He was the ruler of the village called Poraiyāru, near the Kāviri. An enthusiastic warrior, he was the proud possessor of elegant chariots. He delighted in drinking toddy, and his entire village, Poraiyāru, was known

for its perpetual smell of toddy. In this stanza the shoulders of the loving girl are compared to the rich Poraiyāru village.

*Talumpan* : The chief of Üñūr, is found mentioned in stanza 300 of Narrinai. A comparison is drawn between the elephant which sought alms at the hands of this unfortunate chieftain and the unsuccessful Pāṇan who interceded on behalf of an errant husband in reconciling him with his wife. The husband had fallen a victim to the seductions of a harlot, and the Pāṇan tried in vain to restore amity between him and his wedded wife.

*Pulli* :

A chieftain of the northernmost region of Tamilaham mentioned in stanza 14 of Narrinai, is Pulli, the lord of the Vēṅkāṭa Hill. Here the reference to the chieftain is direct, for a girl's lover is stated to have betaken himself to the forest of this hill owned by Pulli. His forest is described as dense and dangerous. The chieftain is spoken of as "Kaḷvarkōmān," in the commentary to Narrinai stanza 147 meaning the lord of thieves. Apparently he was a turbulent chieftain and a terror in the neighbourhood.

On the whole, it is undeniable that certain pieces of valuable information regarding the political history of the Tamil country during the early centuries of the Christian era can be gleaned from Narrinai. It is by no means claimed that the data provided are either full or consecutive. Stray pieces of information regarding the kings, chieftains and their activities are all that can be had. Though they do not provide the materials for the re-construction of a systematic political history, the data furnished can serve to supplement the information available in the other classics of the age. In respect of several details they serve as a corroboratory source.

That the Chēra, Chōla and Pāndya were the three outstanding powers of Tamilaham during the Śāngam age is clear. It is indisputable that the Pallava power had not yet appeared. A plausible suggestion has been made that the references to wars of the Tamil kings with the Āryas relate to the struggle that the Pallava power had with the indigenous rulers. But the origin of the Pallavas is by no means a settled question. One of the latest theories advanced is that the Pallavas, some of whose kings were called Tirayar, were sailors or maritime chieftains, and that they were invaders from the far eastern region viz., South East Asia. Meanwhile, the old theory that the Pallavas were descendants of the Parthians has regained force. However, there is little doubt that the Pallavas were Sanskritists and it is plausible that in the Śāngam age all the patrons of Sanskrit were called Āryas. There is ample evidence to show there were occasional incursions from and to the north. The references to the expeditions of Imaya-varamban, Karikāla and Chēran Cheṅguṭuvan on the one hand and to the Āryan enemies encountered on the Tamil soil on the other, could not have been utterly baseless fabrications. The achievements were apparently exaggerated; but the legends were in all probability built upon a substratum of truth.

Wars with outsiders apart, there occurred frequent struggles among the powers of Tamilnāḍ themselves. The three kings, their vassals and the independent chieftains were often engaged in conflicts. There is no doubt that preoccupation with war was a dominant characteristic of the age. The cause of hostilities was, more often than not, a desire for the display of military prowess. The passion for developing martial valour and heroism frequently promoted aggressive ventures. Among specific causes of war the most

important one was the desire to curb powerful neighbours or an eagerness to obtain possession of coveted places. *Narrinai* reveals how there arose a conflict between Titiyan and Anni over a laurel tree and this is confirmed by *Ahanānūru*. *Ahanānūru* again shows how Kāri, the lord of *Mullūr* killed Ōri, the famous archer, and transferred to the Chēras the possession of the beautiful margosa and jack trees on the fertile Kolli Hills.

In the wars of those days archery and elephants seem to have played a prominent part. Kings and noblemen rode in chariots during the fight. The others went on foot, and hand-to-hand fight with sword, spear and dagger was as common as the employment of the bow and arrow from a distance. Martial valour was prized high, and turning one's back to the advancing foe was considered an irrevocable disgrace. A valiant death in the field of battle was held to be a proud privilege of royalty. These high ideals of martial etiquette occasionally bred certain evils. Not infrequently, high-handed actions occurred among belligerents both during and after the battle. Stanza 384 of *Narrinai* states that the invading soldiers seized all valuable things belonging to the enemy, as a consequence of which there was little left for the people of the place to live upon. Some paddy which had grown up in the deserted tracts was about all that was available to be used by the destitute people of the land. Again the treatment meted out to the women relatives of the chieftain *Piñdan* by Nannan after his victory was doubtless very cruel. Stanza 270 of *Narrinai* describes how the women were deprived of their tufts of hair in order to make a rope for dragging elephants. It is incredible that human hair could have given the required strength for the rope. Obviously it was intended as a symbolic demonstration of the might as well as the vindictiveness of Nannan. Stanza 18 of *Narrinai*, as observed earlier, speaks of the Chēra

king of Ton̄di having pulled out the teeth of the vanquished chieftain Mūvan and fastened them on the doorway of his own palace as a trophy of victory. More or less similar acts of cruelty and vindictiveness are revealed by certain other Saṅgam classics as well. Kuruntogai (Stanza 292) states that for the simple offence of a woman having taken a fruit floating on a stream in his garden, Nannan killed her mercilessly, totally disregarding the appeal for clemency made by the woman's relatives who offered to pay gold and elephants to atone for the offence. Puranāṇūṭu (Stanza 15) shows how the streets of the defeated ruler's capital were ploughed with donkeys and seeds of castor, cotton and various cereals were sown there. It must be admitted that there was a streak of ruthlessness in the treatment of enemies.

But it would be unfair and unhistoric to detach these instances from their context and form general conclusions regarding the ethics of warfare or the prevalent standards of moral behaviour. War has had an inexplicably wonderful code of its own in every clime and in every age. Perhaps what Japan experienced at the hands of 'civilized' enemies very recently is not any the more humane than what happened in certain instances in Tamilnāḍ many centuries ago. In the fight to the finish man has always exhibited his worst traits.

On the other hand, as against the exceptional acts of cruelty there did exist normally a code of ethics in respect of warfare. Before the commencement of attack, the weak, the aged, the brāhmins and others not directly involved in war were arranged to be removed from the path of danger. Normally, too, pillage and plunder as well as wanton destruction and devastation did not occur. "Total warfare" is a feature of modern civilisation. The few instances noticed

earlier seem to have been the exceptions rather than the rule.

The high ideals which monarchs of the Śaṅgam age kept in view in respect of their duties stand out prominently.<sup>21</sup> The king had of course little of the routine administrative functions which are associated in later times with the heads of states. No doubt, he was the fountain of justice, and personal appeals were made to him against gross injustice. For the rest, the village organisation discharged all the administrative and judicial functions. At a time when the line of demarcation between the state and society was not clearly drawn, the village assemblies and social conventions discharged many of the duties now undertaken by the state. The king was more like a protector, guide and philosopher. Always, even at the war camp, he revelled in the company of poets, musicians and dancers. Little wonder that the court was a seat of light and learning.

The Tamil kings were not only generous patrons of poets but some of them were poets themselves. Among monarchs whose poetic compositions have been incorporated in *Narrinai*, mention may be made of the Pāṇḍyan kings, Ukkiraperuvaluti (Stanza 98), Māran Valuti (Stanzas 97 and 301),<sup>22</sup> Arivudai Nambi (Stanza 15), and Muḍa Tirumāran (Stanzas 105 and 228), the Chēra king Marudam Pādiya Ilāṅkaḍuṅgo (Stanza 50) and Pālai Pādiya Peruṅkaḍuṅgo (Stanza 391) and the Chōla chieftain Tonḍaimān Ilāntirayar who has to his credit stanzas 94, 99 and 106.

#### *Social Life :*

While data in respect of political history happen to be indirect, meagre and incoherent, which is perhaps inevitable in a work treating of love, the position is different so far as

social life is concerned. Though love affairs are most elaborately dealt with, the reference to the daily life of the people and to their social customs, beliefs and traditions as well as religious ideas and institutions are considerable. A picture of the life of the people can well be gleaned from the situations portrayed in the verses.

The natural divisions of land were the dominant factors which regulated the lives of the Tamils of that age. *Tolkāppiyam*, the earliest grammar of the Tamils now extant, has laid down that the five divisions, namely *Kuṛiñchi* the land of Hills, *Mullai* the land of forests, *Marudam* the land of plains, *Pälai* the desert and *Neydal* the coastal region had each its distinctive features of life. It has been held by certain writers like Sri P. T. Srinivasa Aiyangar that these five divisions mark the stages of transition of the early people all the world over and that 'as the South Indian spread from region to region, he developed the stages of culture which each region was calculated to produce.'<sup>28</sup> This view is based on the assumption that South India was the original home of the Tamils, which is not indubitably proved. Further, according to this assumption the transition from the less fertile to the more suitable region would mean that at the final stage of development people lived only in *Marudam* or *Neydal*. In fact, it is well known that people continued to remain in all the regions, the *Pälai* not excepted. It is presumable that though people high in the social scale moved from the less fertile to the richer and more suitable region, those of the lower ranks remained in their respective habitat. Whether *Tolkāppiyam* which has postulated the distinctive features of the five regions preceded or succeeded the Classics, assigned by tradition to the third *Saṅgam*, is a moot question. The commonly accepted view of the anterior date of *Tolkāppiyam* has been recently challenged by a few writers. The picture it

provides seems to be that of a slightly later epoch than that of the Śaṅgam classics. There is more of Sanskrit influence in Tolkāppiyam than in some of the Śaṅgam works. The caste divisions and the religious beliefs pertain to a later date. But these are sought to be explained by possible interpolations into the original text. However, the Ahaporuḷ works describe Kaṭaviyal in active operation; Tolkāppiyam, on the other hand, while laying down the features of Kaṭaviyal also records its decline and abandonment. Politically, too, Tolkāppiyam (in Śeyyuḷ Iyal, Stanza 391) suggests the existence of four principal kingdoms, which as the annotators would have it, comprised the Pāṇḍyamaṇḍalam, Malaimaṇḍalam, Chōla-maṇḍalam and Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam. This is the picture of Tamilaham of a period later than the 3rd century A.D. when the Pallavas rose to power in Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam. Moreover, Tolkāppiyam takes Vēṅkaṭam as the northern limit of Tamilaham. This extension of the northern boundary should have occurred after the conquest of North Aruvānāḍu by Karikālan. Narrinai speaks of the country around Vēṅkaṭam as having remained under Pulli, the Kaṭvarkōmān. The extension of the Chōla power up to Vēṅkaṭam by subduing Pulli's successors should have occurred later.

However, Tolkāppiyam, treating the poetics of love, lays down the distinctive characteristics of each region. It distinguishes three bases: the Mudal Poruḷ (the primary factors) the Karupporuḷ (the secondary features, namely deity, food, beast, tree, bird, drum, profession and the type of music produced by yāl) and the distinctive tendencies, namely, the company of lovers, separation, the state expecting the lover's arrival or the state bemoaning the lover's absence and ūṭal or 'love quarrel.' The Mudal Poruḷ, Karupporuḷ and Uripporuḷ of each region are enunciated by him. Thus, it is held that for the Mullai, the Kār season (Winter) and Mālai (the

first third part of the night) are appropriate; for Kurīñchi the Kūtir (autumn) and Yāmam (second part of the night); for Marudam all seasons and the last part of the night and day-break, and for Neydal all seasons and Yērpadu or afternoon and for Pālai the spring, summer, as well as noon. Narrinai, too, provides many instances of deviation from these prescriptions.<sup>24</sup> It may be observed that these were of general application; Tolkāppiyānār held that the Mudalporuļ and Karupporuļ may overlap.<sup>25</sup>

Bearing in mind these general prescriptions let us notice the treatment of love as reflected in Narrinai. Narrinai as well as other works on love hold that the pre-marital love was common among the Tamils of the Śāngam age or more probably of a slightly earlier period. The handling of Kaļaviyal by the poets suggests that they were not portraying the contemporary situations but what had existed earlier and had given rise to certain conventions. However, it has been said that Kaļaviyal corresponded to the Gandharva pattern of marriage which was one of the systems in vogue among the Aryans of old. There is little doubt that Kaļaviyal was ennobled almost into a fine art in which certain well-recognised conventions were harmonised with a rustic simplicity and forthrightness. The poets of the age enter into the spirit of the situations of love and describe them with striking vividity. It is held that Kaļavu, or what may be called courtship, was adopted only by the higher strata of society in all the five regions. The Adiyār or the servile classes who depended on others for their living are not believed to have figured in the picture. This sounds strange, because love is an elemental feature common to all; but, for one thing, according to the conventions of the age, marriage among the dependants had to be approved of by their masters. Moreover, Ilampūraṇar, commenting on Sutra 23 of Ahattinai Iyal of Poruļadhikāram

states that the lower classes were devoid of natural reserve and shyness, as a consequence of which they were unsuited for love of the proper type; he adds that they were entitled to what Tolkappiyar calls Peruntinai (Poruntakkāmam) i.e., unnatural or perverted love.

In passing it may be mentioned that the gradations of society known to Narrinai and many of the early classics were based exclusively on occupation. The caste divisions of the later age had not taken hold of Tamil society then, and, therefore the independent earning members of Kuravar, the hunter, the Ulavar, the cultivators, the Āyar, the shepherds, the Paradavar, the fishermen, were all entitled to take to the Kalavu pattern of love.

As observed earlier, the poets who picture the romantic situations were not describing contemporary events which they witnessed. In all probability the situations pertain to a slightly earlier epoch which had become conventional. Poets based their imaginary portraits on such conventions, a few of which might have survived down to their times while the bulk of them had vanished. That is one reason why we observe that, more often than not, the man who addresses his love to a damsel was a chieftain or prince (Chērpan); the girl in the picture, too, is a member of an affluent family. She is in a position to have with her a *Tōli* or companion who plays the role of a faithful comrade a genuine friend and guide. The companion was usually the daughter of her foster mother. But there is little justification to imagine that the *Tōli* belonged to a class of dependants; very often she belonged to the same social position as the mistress and was one of her neighbours. However, the poets picture the companion as an ideal mate for the girl in love. Her sincere attachment to her mistress, her forbearance, sympathy and understanding as well as her

worldly wisdom<sup>26</sup> are all exquisitely portrayed by numerous verses of *Narrinai* and other Śaṅgam works dealing with love.

The girl who falls in love and enters the Kaṭavu relationship is, according to ancient Tamil tradition, twelve years of age,<sup>27</sup> while the boy lover is about 16. This may seem strange to us now. Several explanations are possible. Perhaps, in the period in question, the age of maturity was earlier; or perhaps emotional attachment and ideal love independent of physical pleasure commenced early in life; or it might be that the poets in their idealisation of Kaṭavu or courtship thought that the adolescent period of innocence was eminently suited for their portrayal. But it is significant that according to Tolkāppiyar the girl in love is a mature girl with characteristic reserve and shyness.<sup>28</sup> If so, the first of these suggestions alone is acceptable.

Theoretically the Kaṭavu period was expected to last for a couple of months, though one writer thinks that it lasted for barely a fortnight. The commencement of Kaṭavu, or what may be literally translated as illicit love, but more appropriately taken as courtship, is picturesquely portrayed. When the girl is out attending to her outdoor work, by chance she happens to see an youngster. The young man feels attracted by her and love at first sight springs up between the two. Thereafter, they meet often and their mutual attachment increases in intensity. The fact of their love affair is not generally known to others except to the *Tōli*, the bosom friend and constant companion of the girl. The loving girl happens to be sent by her parents to attend to such work as watching the cultivated field in order to protect it from destruction by pests and birds. This affords welcome opportunities for the lovers to meet. An ideal mingling of hearts, or what is described as

'Iyarkai Puñarchi' occurs at their meetings during this period. This was no doubt an ideal form of association motivated by spontaneous and natural love. Their exchange of love and ever-increasing attachment form the themes of numerous verses in Narrinai as well as in other Saṅgam classics dealing with Love. But it is an open question whether it was a union of hearts and nothing more. The references to 'Muyakkam,' to the reddish eyes and to a mother's mention of an unusual smell coming from her tuft are all suggestive.

It would appear that during the Saṅgam Age fidelity to the lover was rarely, if ever, broken. The Kaļavu episode was invariably followed by marriage. Where the parents of the girl objected to the marriage, an embarrassing situation appeared. Perhaps the importance attached to the approval of the parents suggests that the transition to the later system was emerging. At any rate either during or immediately after the Saṅgam Age, Kaļavu as an institution tended to decline. Tolkāppiyam reveals that the ideal love was sometimes abused and this degeneracy led to its discredit and abandonment by society.<sup>29</sup> Since the literary works of the Saṅgam epoch which deal with love assume that Kalaviyal in its orthodox form remained in force, this revelation by Tolkāppiyam is presumably an indication of the date of Tolkāppiyam.

Reviewing the nature of courtship as it prevailed in the Saṅgam Age, certain features are noticeable. There was generally an intensity of love. Separation of the lovers was a matter of agony. Separations occurred due to various causes. During the period of Kaļavu, after meeting each other at an unknown place, they had to part. A longer separation occurred when the man, after having loved the girl had to betake himself to a distant place in order to

earn an independent fortune. This separation was a period of ordeal for the lovers and there are numerous verses which depict the trials and tribulations of lovers. It is remarkable that though both the parties were equally moved by intensity of love and consequent agony, poets have dwelt more frequently on the theme of the girl's pang of separation than that of the man. *Narrinai* has numerous verses depicting the feelings and bewailings of the girls under separation. The grief of the loving girl is not infrequently expressed by her companion. There are lamentations on the part of the companion that her mistress's beauty had vanished. Her physical frame enfeebled, her shoulders had become emaciated and her bangles had become too loose for her hands.<sup>30</sup> Stanzas 79, 236 and 239 go to the extent of stating that the girl considered death to be far better than the wretched life of separation from her lover. Stanzas 37 and 296 show how the girl bemoans her misery on account of separation from her lover during the Kar season, when man and woman find happiness in each other's company. Stanza 304 states that the girl felt her life to be dallying between pleasure and misery, that when the lover remained by her side she felt cheerful in spirit and healthy of body while during his absence all her joy and health had vanished. The girl's unbearable state of separation is vividly described in stanza 61, where it is stated that, unable to get even a wink of sleep, she spent the whole time in heaving deep sighs of agony. When her mother enquired of her the cause of her sleeplessness, she had to admit the real circumstance responsible for her position.

Though the mother sometimes understands and appreciates the situation, she restrains her daughter from indulging in the romantic venture.<sup>31</sup> She tries to check it by compelling her to remain within the confines of the house. The girl in love

tries her best to conceal her romantic entanglement from her mother, because she is sure to be restrained.<sup>32</sup> Stanza 143 shows how even though the mother realised that it was natural for her daughter to embark in Kaļavu, she felt it incumbent on her to restrain her and she repented for her failure to check her even at the outset.<sup>33</sup>

The mother reprimands the girl and even belabours her in order to compel her to give up her association with her lover. The mother is really worried over the public slur. She heaps curses on the villagers, and at the heart of hearts she has a feeling that the girl should not be restrained. The reaction of a mother towards the man who eloped with her daughter is indicated in stanza 198; feeling that her daughter's action was not totally wrong, she was only worried as to how the tender girl would stand the trials of the arduous journey through the forest. (Stanza 305).

#### *Vēlan Veriyādal:*

When the daughter was suffering from love sickness, the mother was in certain cases unable to determine the real cause. There are several instances of the mother invoking the aid of Muruga by holding a ceremony called the *Veriyādal*. The priest conducting the ceremony was believed to pass into a trance and divine the cause of the trouble.<sup>34</sup> The description of *Vēlan Veriyādal* is found in certain verses.<sup>35</sup>

There was a common belief that people possessed of the spirit of Murugan would be in a state of depression and agony. As a prelude to the treatment it had to be ascertained whether the malady was due to the possession by the spirit of *Muruganaṅgu* (முருகனங்கு). This was determined by consulting a gypsy or sooth-sayer. The sooth-sayer, who was usually an elderly woman, was invited to the house of the affected girl. A measure of paddy was placed in a receptacle in front

of an image of Muruga and the girl was asked to keep standing in front of it and worship Muruga. After a time the paddy was sorted into groups of four each and the number of the remaining paddy was believed to indicate the true cause of the malady. If the remaining number of paddy was one, two or three, then the belief was that the malady was brought about through the operation of *Muruganāṅgu* i.e. Muruga's anger.<sup>36</sup> If it was four, then it was adjudged to be a different malady altogether. Where it was thought to have been brought about by *Muruganāṅgu*, immediately the Vēlan or priest who offered worship to Muruga was invited to the sacred spot set apart for this ceremony. Prayers and offerings were made to god Muruga. The elaborate ceremony accompanied by music, included the offering of goat sacrifice to the deity. There was a gathering of womenfolk in particular. The priest got into a trance and, as if inspired, he gave out the cause of the trouble as well as the remedy.

It is surprising that while *Kaḷavu* was widely known to be prevalent, the people of the village did not take kindly to individual cases when they came to public notice. Scandal-mongering became rife. In the parlance of the age *Ambal* was the term applied to the public comment and the expression of disapprobation. The extreme form of public slur was known as *Alar*. A typical case of *Alar* is described in stanza 149, where it is stated that the women-folk of the village, standing in small or big groups used to scandalise the girl in love, showing their contempt. Pointing to the girl in question they seemed to indicate that she had entered into *Kaḷavu* association with man.

There were instances of mild sensations developing into abominable scandals. Stanza 249 mentions how *Ambal* turned into vociferous *Alar*. Nachchinār̥kiniyar would state

that *Ambal* was a subdued scandal while *Alar* was a public uproar.

“அம்பல் முகிழ் முகிழ்த்தல்; அலர் பலரறிய சொன்னிகழ்த்தல்”.

The uproar raised by the *Alar* spread quickly and became unbearable for the girls concerned.<sup>37</sup> *Kalavu* was thus considered an illegitimate and unmoral practice. It is interesting to learn that the village where the slightest suspicion provided the basis of public talk was nicknamed *Ambalūr* (அம்பலூர்). It may be mentioned that the people of *Kuriñchi* would even pursue the man who indulged in *Kalavu* and attack him. For fear of the girl's mother, on the one hand, and of the public slur on the other, the man used to meet his sweet-heart surreptitiously at dead of night.<sup>38</sup>

Both of these types of restraints were felt by the girl as unjust and unnatural.<sup>39</sup> The companion of the girl who was restrained by her mother and at the same time, was frightened by public odium, gave expression to the unfairness of social standards. There was an under-current of feeling among the lovers that *Kalavu* was natural and legitimate. Stanza 132 indicates her intensity of love and mentions the lamentations of the girl over the restrictions imposed by her mother and adds that if the lover failed to turn up at night that would prove to be her day of death. The girl deplores the rigour of the mother's control as well as the public watchman's vigil.

Several verses refer to the eagerness on the part of the girl lover to have the formal marriage celebrated soon. Stanza 23 is interesting, for the companion of the mistress states that her lover had been unduly postponing the marriage and that he appeared to be lacking fidelity. Any person guilty of wilful desertion was considered as one devoid of a high moral calibre.<sup>40</sup>

*Madalēratal :*

At times, however, it happened that though the loving man was anxious to conduct the marriage, the parents of the girl refused to give their consent.<sup>41</sup> A strange custom of the early Tamils was that the loving man under such a condition used to subject himself to a severe indignity and mortification. In order to impress upon the girl's parents his sincere love and to obtain their approval for the marriage he used to come to the home of the girl riding on an artificial horse made of palmyrah stem and leaves. His dress and appearance would suggest that he was in a forlorn and desperate state. It used to be felt that in the event of failure in his desperate mission he would turn mad. It is said that he wore a garland made of flowers which were not considered sweet-smelling or auspicious.<sup>42</sup> There is no doubt that these flowers were worthless and were never used at all by people. The poet's description of them as 'Villāppū'<sup>43</sup> (வில்வபு) i.e. 'those unable to be sold' is a clear pointer to this fact. The artificial horse on which the despondent lover was riding was, however, decorated with bells and clothes.<sup>44</sup> His position, on the whole, was pathetic. If the parents of the girl took pity on him, and if by reason of public opinion and the pressure of the girl, her parents finally agreed to give her in marriage to him, then with great relief and pleasure he gave up his fantastic role. If, however, it happened that the object of his mission was not fulfilled, either he deserted the village and went away or committed suicide. In fact, *Madalēratal* itself was considered an extreme step. Stanza 377 shows that it was thought far better to lose one's life than to have to resort to *Madalēratal*.

Where the parents were determined to prevent the alliance, sometimes the lover cleverly eloped with his sweetheart and set up a home either in his village or in some

other place. In this matter, invariably the girl's companion played an important role. She fixed with the two lovers the time and the day when they should start unnoticed by others. The moment the matter came to the knowledge of the girl's relatives, they set out to pursue them. But when they met the lovers, invariably the girl expressed her firm resolution to become her lover's life-partner and that there was no use in restraining them from their determined path. It is interesting to find that the mother of the girl sometimes considered this natural and justifiable. On the other hand, her grief was that her daughter would have to pass through arduous pathways and dangerous forests.

### *Marriage :*

After the lovers had betaken themselves to the man's house, the relatives of the parties concerned, became reconciled and a formal marriage ceremony was held. But in the vast majority of cases there was no need for Madalēratal or Konḍutalaikkalital (கொண்டுதலைக்கழிதல்), for the parents of the girl agreed to the marriage of the lovers.

Generally there did not arise any serious difficulty when the two lovers were more or less of the same social level. Where there was conspicuous disparity in social status, then, as now, obstruction for such alliances appeared from the relatives of the lovers. But even in such cases the determined firmness of the lovers, more often than not, decided the issue and the marriage took place.

A girl of Neydal who was loved by a prince told him that there existed a wide disparity in their social position; he was a wealthy chieftain whereas she was a poor daughter of a fisherman. Her *toli* (தோழி) said that her mistress was engaged in leading the life of a fisher-woman herself and that consequently her body would be emitting the smell of fish

which would be detested by him. Therefore, she wanted him to give up the idea of alliance with her.<sup>45</sup>

However, when the parents of the boy and girl were agreeable to the marriage alliance, a preliminary function corresponding to the modern betrothal ceremony was held. A small party of the bridegroom's relatives headed by Brāhmins and men of high social status entered the bride's house. Formally they pleaded excuse for delay in fulfilling their pledged word and praise the *toli* the companion of the bride, for her noble efforts in expediting the auspicious function.<sup>46</sup> Prior to the celebration of the marriage the bridegroom had to make a payment of money to the parents of the girl.<sup>47</sup> Having ascertained the price he had to pay for her, and agreeing to pay it, he proceeded to make the preliminary arrangements with Brāhmins and noblemen for the conduct of the betrothal ceremony. It would appear that in the Sangam Age the payment of a bride-price was obligatory. There is no reference whatever to a dowry having figured in the settlement of marriages.

Normally the auspicious time for marriage was believed to be the period approaching the harvest season.<sup>48</sup> It was also the season when the Vēngai tree flowered, a circumstance probably considered auspicious for the celebration of marriage.<sup>49</sup> For attending the marriage function, the rich bridegroom went in a decorated chariot; those who accompanied the bridegroom went on foot. It is notable that the bridegroom of the Neydal region went to the function with a net and fishing rod.<sup>50</sup> The ceremony conducted was a grand one according to the standards of the times. Instrumental music was played on the occasion.<sup>51</sup> Narrinai does not refer to the use of the sacred symbol *Tāli*.<sup>52</sup>

*Parattayar :*

Karpiyal or the wedded life of the married couple invariably followed Kaļaviyal. Theoretically the observance of a moral code in conjugal relationship was enjoined on men no less than on women. But there seems to have existed a gulf between theory and practice. Man appears to have often deviated from the lawful path. According to the prescribed tradition of the Tamils, ideal love was of the *Aintinai* type. Both *Kaikkilai* and *Perundinai* were not suited for the higher sections of society. One form of *Perundinai* was man's relationship with Parattayar or public women. Therefore, connections with Parattayar or concubines was looked down upon as unnatural and unbecoming of elegant men. Tolkāppiyānār and Tiruvalļuvar condemn this illicit relationship in unmistakable terms. Nevertheless, *Narginai*, no less than the other classics of love, reveals, that in actual practice harlotry had become a well established institution; several men fell victims to the paramours of the public women. It is notable that during the period of pregnancy and confinement of the wife the man was inclined to seek sexual indulgence at the hands of Parattayar.<sup>53</sup> It was but natural that the lawfully wedded wife became furious when she came to know about it. Public opinion, too, condemned such immoral relationship. The Pāṇan and Viṣali served as mediators between the man and parattayar. Later, too, when the wedded wife protested and evinced her wrath the Pāṇan tried to intervene and restore cordiality between the husband and wife.<sup>54</sup> Often there sprang up acute rivalry and ill-feeling between the Parattai who had enticed the man and his lawful wife. There is an interesting instance of a Parattai inciting the hatred of the wife against her husband by causing his attachment to herself to be made known to the wife.<sup>55</sup> She sent word that it was he, who, out of infatuation had seized her sweet-smelling tuft of hair. Evidently the Parattai wanted to sow

discord between the man and his legitimate partner so that he might permanently come under her own influence. A more or less similar idea is found in stanza 225 in which it is stated that the Parattai openly accused the man within the hearing of the companion of the legal wife. She too, accused the man for having voluntarily sought her association. In one case, on behalf of the mistress her companion burst out furiously against the weak-minded man who had fallen a victim to the amours of a parattai, and she scornfully asked him to gratify his physical lust as he liked and never to return to the house of her mistress. Even more arresting is the righteous indignation of a devoted wife who refused to touch her husband on account of his association with a parattai. She reproached him by saying that touching a person who had illicit connection with a Parattai is like touching the discarded pots.<sup>56</sup>

Parattayar seem to have vied with each other in winning the affections of affluent men. Unseemly quarrels and bitter rivalry arose between two Parattayar who competed with each other in capturing the heart of one and the same person. Certain stanzas<sup>57</sup> of Narrinai refer to the piquant situations which arose when a Parattai who had won the heart of a man found to her utter discomfiture that a rival had entered the field.

It is notable that among the Parattayar there were two categories, known as *Chēripparattai* and *Kādalparattai*. The *Chēripparattai* appears to have been a public harlot, while the *Kādalparattai* preferred to have relationship with a single individual of her choice. More often than not, she led a virtuous life characterised by fidelity to the chosen person. Little wonder that, of the two classes, the *Kādalparattai* occupied a higher social position than the *Chēripparattai*.

On the whole, it is clear that Parattayar constituted a stain on society. Married women sedulously tried to protect their husbands from the seductions of their Parattayar.<sup>58</sup> While recognizing the existence of this foul institution it would be improper to over-emphasise the position it occupied. It is of supreme importance to realize that the Parattayar have received a great attention at the hands of the poets because of the piquant situations which arose in their dealings with men. From the number of stanzas devoted to the handling of themes connected with Parattayar it would be totally improper and unfair to exaggerate the role played by them in the social life of the day. Indeed, it would not be too much to say that it was because of social disapprobation that poets found a special interest in the handling of themes connected with this blot on society. An outspoken characterisation, breathing a bitter condemnation, of this social stain is of a piece with the forthrightness of the poets. It is because society had built up certain standards of conduct that deviations from them received an excessive and almost a disproportionate attention at the hands of the poets of the age. False conventions of depicting the rosier side of life and ignoring the darker one was totally alien to the tendencies of those times.

#### *Standards of moral conduct :*

Early Tamil society had evolved some conception of true love and norms of moral conduct. The lapses and the protests they provoked reveal the ideals held in view. The virtues of immaculate love and true partnership in life between the husband and wife find their echo in several verses of Narrinai. One of these states that even poison offered by a real lover would not be rejected : (Stanza 355).

“ முந்தை இருங்கு நட்டோர் கொடுப்பின்  
நஞ்சுசம் உண்பர் நனிஙாகரிகர் ”

In passing it may be mentioned that these lines bear a tinge of similarity with the precept in Kural 586. Love of a high order which promotes unbounded courage and unselfish sacrifice was known and appreciated. It is this noble feature which the poet கோவை கிர்மாகார செலியார் has in view when he says that a tiger was prepared to attack and kill an elephant for appeasing the hunger of its partner. (Stanza 383).

“ கல்லயல் கலித்த கருங்கால் வேங்கை  
அலங்கலம் தொட்டில் அன்ன குருளை  
வயப்புனிற்று இரும்பினப் பசித்தென வயப்புலி  
புகாமுகஞ் சிதையத் தாக்கிக் களிறட்டு”

It is no doubt poetic imagery that is offered in this excerpt; but it reveals the conception of true love. The idea of depicting it through the illustration of an animal was apparently expected to be significant. It appears to have been realized that ideal love was not physical, much less sexual in character; it was an attachment of spirit. It is this idea which the poet அம்மீவார் exemplifies when he says that a loving girl, struck with sorrow that her lover had not turned up as expected, declares that she does not even dread death, but is only anxious that in the life to come, if she is not born as a human being she may forget her lover. She says

“ சாதல் அஞ்சேன் அஞ்சவல் சாவின்  
பிறப்புப்பிறி தாகுவது ஆயின்  
மறக்குவேன் கொல் லென் காதலன் எனவே ”

(Naginai, 397)

The importance of a nobler love transcending sexual appeal, has been admirably expressed through the appeal of a girl's companion to her lover, calling upon him to be always attached to the girl even long after she loses her physical charm. (Stanza 10).

“ அண்ணாந் தேந்திய வனமுலை தளரினும்  
 பொன்னேர் மேனி மணியிற் ரூற்றத  
 நன்னெடுங் கூந்தல் நரையொடு முடிப்பினும்  
 நித்த லோம்பு மதி பூக்கே மூர் ”

A high standard of moral virtue seems to have been in vogue among family women. Though this was common to all the regions, it was exemplified best in Mullai because it was there that the separation of lovers occurred most and fidelity was on trial, as it were. It is noteworthy that Mullai became a synonymous name for Karpu or chastity. The pang of separation is borne with fortitude controlling the intense feeling of agony; no wonder that numerous verses appear pertaining to this theme. It is considered as an essential virtue of the noble woman to bear the separation with courage.<sup>59</sup> In Stanza 289 the woman having waited long for the arrival of her husband is stated to have cried that just as the fire set on to the felled trees at night by the shepherds get extinguished of their own accord, so, too, her lust would automatically cool itself down.<sup>60</sup> The husband himself knows how longingly his wife would be yearning for his return. Relating how his wife had admirably put up with separation from him on a previous occasion he states that she had remained with her hair unkempt, which showed her immaculate chastity.<sup>61</sup>

The ideal man, too, was expected to lead a moral life. Indulgence with Parattayar was condemned,<sup>62</sup> although as observed earlier, quite a number of men lapsed into immoral ways. (St. 226). In theory the moral code was applicable to man no less than to women. But then, as always, here as all the world over, man made laws and broke them with impunity. Man's ownership of property, his unbounded freedom to go out and his inherent dislike of the humdrum domestic life were perhaps some of the factors responsible for the consequent existence of a class of harlots.

Associated with chastity, certain other virtues were also expected of women. Reserve and restraint, arising from modesty, were considered the most essential of the feminine virtues. In Stanza 17, Nochi Niyamaṅgīlār narrates an incident which illustrates vividly the supreme importance of modesty for women. A girl in love was weeping on account of separation from her lover. Her mother openly consoled her that he would return soon. Then the girl instantaneously realized that she had abandoned her inborn modesty, which was far more precious than life itself. She is stated to have stopped crying and to have resolved upon maintaining her modesty. Again Yeinandaiyār states<sup>63</sup> that during the absence of the husband, modesty is the only impregnable fortification of woman. Narrinai, like the other Saṅgam works, reveals that the society of that age recognized and upheld certain distinctive feminine virtues. It was idle to expect these virtues among the harlots. Poets of the age deny the existence of these virtues among the Parattai and suggest by implication that they constituted the fundamental assets of the well-bred woman of social status.

#### *Diet :*

Though Narrinai treats largely of love, it throws indirectly considerable light on the habits and customs of the Tamils of the age. The casual nature of the information provided attests its reliability. There was little or no attempt at furnishing a made-up picture. The inevitable limitation of such references is that a full and cogent account of the social life cannot be obtained.

In respect of diet, it is clear that rice formed the staple food. Millet or tinai (*தினை*) was often a substitute for rice, especially in Kurinchi. Vegetables must have been used for the preparation of accessories, as learnt from other classics. Narrinai, however, mentions ‘Karunaikkilaṅgin

Porikkaṇi' in Stanza 367. It is notable that the common practice of eating food out of plantain leaves had come into vogue.<sup>64</sup> Fruits were very popular. In Pālai even the Vilāmpalām (wood apple) was used as food. The jack fruit was considered a great delicacy, and there are several references to its wide popularity.<sup>65</sup> It is surprising to learn that Umanar, the salt vendors, ate ripe tamarind fruits to appease their hunger. Gooseberry was popular; in particular, persons journeying through forests or deserts ate them frequently. (St. 271).

Flesh eating was doubtless very common. Goat's meat was most popular, though the flesh of white rats was occasionally used.<sup>66</sup> The Kuṭavar were very fond of the flesh of the Muṭavupanṛi.<sup>67</sup> It is notable that the elephant's teeth were dried up and kept for use over a considerable time as ivory.<sup>68</sup> Pork, too, was popular with hunters.<sup>69</sup> Meat was thus a principal item of food and usually considerable care was taken to make delicious preparations of meat with the admixture of ghī and condiments.<sup>70</sup> Rice was cooked along with meat and ghī and condiments, and especially on festive occasions, this delicacy figured prominently.

Fish was commonly used not only by the people of Neydal but by others as well. Dried and preserved fish is found mentioned. Maṭṭar ate fried oysters. The Yaṇar in Pālai are stated to have used flesh not only as the part of their diet, but delicacies were prepared out of meat and served on occasions of grand feasts. Though there is no specific reference in Naṭṭirai to the Brāhmins having abstained from meat, a verse in Puṭanānūru indicates that they took to an almost exclusively vegetarian diet. It is not known which other classes had begun to abstain from eating flesh. From the circumstance that Tirukkural at a slightly later period preached against the use of animal food, it is

probable that even during the Śāngam age, perhaps under the influence of the Buddhists and Jains, some sections of the people began to restrict themselves to an exclusively vegetarian diet. Some classes of people observed occasionally fasts connected with certain religious observances (St. 272).

Toddy was as popular as meat and invariably the two went hand in hand. Many are the stanzas which advert to the excessive popularity of this beverage. Toddy was stored in pipes of bamboo as well as in pitchers. The more sour the toddy the greater the relish. There is little doubt that it was a strong and intoxicating drink.<sup>71</sup> Stanza 35 makes it clear that under the influence of toddy a person seemed to become totally transformed.

Toddy was frequently brewed into a hot liquor and taken. In the evening Paratavar invariably enjoyed a drinking bout.<sup>72</sup> That it was shared by relatives and friends on festive occasions is obvious from the references found in *Narrinai*.<sup>73</sup>

#### *Dress and Decoration:*

Normally both men and women wore clothes made of cotton. At times girls took to the fanciful dress made of leaves and flowers as a decorative garment.<sup>74</sup> It is seen that the *Talai* (தலை), as this dress formed of leaves and flowers was called, differed in its pattern from place to place. But there is no doubt that in all places it was a special dress worn on extra-ordinary occasions. At times of gay festivals in particular, ladies took to *talai*. Rich ladies used to wear *kaliṅgam* or fine cloth of cotton. Sheaths of grassy weeds (*Kōrai*) were worn<sup>75</sup> principally by people of the hills and forests. It is learnt that *Kuravar* women adopted the bark of certain trees as their dress.<sup>76</sup>

Attention was paid to personal decoration, particularly by women. The tuft of hair received great care; indeed, there are few verses describing the loving girl which do not advert to the sweet-smelling hair done into a handsome knot. The beautifully made tufts of girls are compared to the outspread feathers of the peacock.<sup>77</sup> That girls often had their hair done into five plaits is learnt from *Narrinai* as well.<sup>78</sup> Painting eye lashes was another familiar feature of personal decoration on the part of girls.<sup>79</sup>

Both sexes took enthusiastically to garlands. Brāhmaṇ ladies adorned themselves with the Mullai flowers.<sup>80</sup> Sweet-smelling sandal paste was smeared on the chest.<sup>81</sup> A rather interesting custom was for women to draw decorative designs on their breasts with a fragrant substance, called *Toyyil*, which resembled sandal paste.<sup>82</sup>

Ornaments were immensely popular, and there were several varieties of them. Girls had bracelets and bangles.<sup>83</sup> Bangles were sometimes made of excellent gold and bedecked with precious stones.<sup>84</sup> Anklets were common.<sup>85</sup> Rich girls used to wear, besides these, a heavy chain of gold in eight loops around the waist.<sup>86</sup> It was known as *Kāl* (கால்) or *Kāñji* (காஞ்சி). Girls wore also a gold chain known by the name of *Ponmaṇimālai*, which was strung with gold coins.<sup>87</sup> Generally, children of the rich had profuse ornaments of gold. Mēkalai was an ornament worn around the waist. Girls had the ear-ring, known as *Ūśal onkulai* (ஊசல் ஒண்குழை). This appears to have been similar to later-day ear-rings called *Simikki* (சிமிக்கி) or *Kudaikkadukhan* (குடைக்கடுக்கன்). Sometimes care was taken to choose ornaments suited to the personal appearance of individuals.<sup>88</sup> This indicates elegance of taste, although it can hardly be ignored that tastes vary from age to age and from people to people.

Rich people had dishes as well as plates of gold. A girl in one instance is stated to have been accustomed to taking milk out of a golden vessel.<sup>89</sup> Elephants were frequently decorated with gold masks on the forehead and trunk.<sup>90</sup> An artistic sense was displayed in decorating the houses with drawings of decorative designs in front of the entrance.

### *Games and Amusements:*

It is but natural that the people, young and old, resorted to certain games, pastimes and amusements. Essentially a rural people, living in small villages, with ample leisure and scope for close contact with each other, the Tamils of the Śāṅgam Age appear to have taken enthusiastically to various pastimes. Besides games which were common to the whole of Tamilagam, each *Tīṇai* had its distinctive games as well. Youngsters generally took to the game called ‘*Pāṇḍil*’ (பாண்டில்)<sup>91</sup> at which gooseberries were moved from one place to another within lines drawn to a pattern on the ground. Those who succeeded in sending the fruit into the assigned places were the winners. Football was a popular game.<sup>92</sup> The football which was made of cotton was sewn over by cotton thread, and hence it was known as *Variyanippandu* (வரியனிப்பந்து).<sup>93</sup> Girls enjoyed erecting fancy structures like dolls with sand.<sup>94</sup>

Swinging on a pole suspended by ropes was a favourite pastime with girls. The ropes used for the purpose were made out of the fibre of the palm tree.<sup>95</sup>

Kuṭava girls used to participate in a number of games and frolicsome entertainments on the common space of the village.<sup>96</sup> *Ōrai* was a popular sport of girls played with dolls.<sup>97</sup> The poet Pirān chāttanār says that it is unfair and harmful to restrain girls from playing with their mates and participating in outdoor games.<sup>98</sup>

Lovers used to sport in and near brooks. Dance was a favourite entertainment and dances of several kinds were in vogue. On festive occasions, the pattern of dance called Tuṇaṅgai (துணங்கை) was played.<sup>99</sup> Several other varieties of dance are mentioned in other Śaṅgam classics; Narrinai speaks of one more variety, viz., the Kuravai<sup>100</sup> which was a dance accompanied by the party marking a shrill sound with the tip of the tongue. Occasionally rope dance by experts provided amusement for the people. Music, either to the accompaniment of dance or provided independently, was very much in vogue. Instrumental and vocal music attained a considerable measure of proficiency. Pāñchēry (பான்சேரி), a part of the village where the professional musicians resided, was a seat of music. The skill of the Pāñar in the fine arts of music and dance became as proverbial as their distressing poverty. Rich boys used to play on the drum as a piece of entertainment. (Stanza 58).

#### *Festivals :*

The monotony of life was relieved also by the celebration of festivals from time to time. Some of them were periodic and they took place at specific days of the year, while others were casual, dependent upon the occurrence of happenings, like marriage and birth of a child.

Among the festivals which were celebrated at stated times, the festival of Tai Poṅgal<sup>101</sup> was an important one. It was a celebration associated with the harvest, and therefore, it symbolised plenitude and prosperity. Here the reference is to a feast on the first day of the month of Tai by those who had observed fasts on the previous nights. It is not improbable that the Poṅgal celebration had its genesis in this ceremony.

Another festival common in the Śāṅgam age and ever since then is the bonfire festival on the Kṛittigai day of the Kārtigai month every year.<sup>102</sup> The origin of this festival is traceable to Hindu mythology and astronomy. It was the position of the Kṛittigai star that determined the day of the festival. Thus it indicates the growing belief in mythology and astronomy. Apart from these specified festivals there were frequent occasions of merry entertainments. Stanza 90 speaks of the village resounding with the festive merriments of the people.

*Occupations :*

The people in each Tiṇai (region) pursued their traditional occupations. Thus the Kuṛavar in Kuṛiñchi took to hunting and cultivation, the Uḷavar in Marudam to agriculture, those in Mullai to the tending of cattle, those in Neydal to fishing and those in Pālai to roaming and even to highway robbery. Though these were generally the occupations pursued in the particular regions there were deviations as well. In quite a number of cases people seem to have pursued more than one occupation. Thus some Kuṛavar took to agriculture alongside with their hunting.<sup>103</sup> In fact, while cultivation was the principal occupation in Mullai, it was adopted as a subsidiary occupation in all other regions, except in Pālai. The tilling of the soil was done by buffaloes harnessed to the plough and the process of cultivation was much the same as in later times. (Stanza 60).

Certain features of the occupations, in each of the regions, find casual mention in the poem. Salt manufactured in Neydal was taken in bandies by salt merchants called Umaṇar to various places in the neighbourhood. This is adverted to in several verses.<sup>104</sup> The salt merchants in Marudam are said to have sold salt in exchange for paddy.<sup>105</sup> Maṇavar often took to highway robbery. They have been described as

‘Koduvinil Ādavar, Āṭalaikalvar.’ (கொடுவில் ஆடவர்; ஆறலைக்கானவர்). It is learnt that they did not hesitate even to kill people for the sake of robbing them of their belongings.<sup>106</sup>

The fishermen of Neydal who were active at night used to dry their nets under the shade of the laurel tree during day time.<sup>107</sup> For the purpose of fishing in the deep wide ocean, fishermen went in their boats, to which mats were fastened. They seem to have acquired considerable skill in using mats in order to take advantage of the wind and sail fast. When they went out fishing at night the fisherman kept burning lights in small dishes (கிளிஞ்சல்). The flame was kept burning with the fish oil.<sup>108</sup>

It may be noted that there existed professional washermen. A reference is found to washermen who washed clothes and had them made white and stiff by the use of rice water, viz., water left over from boiling rice. (Stanza 90).

Whatever occupation was pursued, the people in the various regions seem to have applied themselves to their work with earnestness. Women co-operated with them in the occupations wherever possible. In Kuriñchi spinning of cotton yarn is known to have been done by women. Widows used to spin a fine variety of cotton.<sup>109</sup> In passing it may be mentioned that cotton was cured by beating it with bow.<sup>110</sup> In Mullai milk was curdled and butter taken out of it. The mud pot used for churning the curd was known as “*Tairtāli*.<sup>111</sup> Churning of curd was common not only in the Mullai region but in all other regions, too. It is learnt that early in the morning the sound of churning curd was heard from the houses in Pālai and presumably, therefore, from those of other regions as well.<sup>112</sup>

Different classes of artisans were at work.<sup>113</sup> There were smiths who took to the making of vessels of brass and

copper and jewels of gold.<sup>114</sup> The goldsmith who made jewels pursued his flourishing art and there appears to have existed a great demand for gold ornaments.<sup>115</sup> It is hardly necessary to add that potters were, as in early times, engaged in making vessels, and pots of mud. Potters of the village are said to have been entrusted with the duty of proclaiming to the people the time and date of particular festivals.<sup>116</sup>

The mention of different classes of people like smiths, washermen and potters raises the question regarding the existence of caste in the age of Narrinai of the Saṅgam age. Sometimes a facile view is advanced that the Tamils of old had no caste distinction and that caste was introduced only by the Āryans. This does not seem to be fully borne out by the known facts. No doubt we hear of Brahmins; but the other divisions are not so clear-cut as in the Āryan system. The Kshatriya is hardly mentioned; on the other hand, people called Maṭavar, Maṭavar and others formed the warriors. The duties assigned to the Vaiśyas and Śūdras, too, were discharged by several classes of people. What appears probable is that there emerged among the Tamils social divisions based upon their occupations which were determined largely by the region in which they lived. Gradually the Kuṭavar, Āyar, Vellālar, Maṭavar and Paradavar tended to become endogamous groups. Love and marriage seem to have normally occurred on the basis of these subdivisions. Subdivisions among them also began to appear eg. a distinction between Vēṭṭuvar and Kuṭavar had emerged.<sup>117</sup> Moreover, among the Kuriñchi people the lower section was known as Koḍiyar and Kodichchiyar (கொடியர் and கொடிச்சியர்) while the upper one was Kuṭavar and Kuṭattiyar (குறவர் and குறத்தியர்). Subsequently groups pursuing auxiliary occupations appear like the smiths and potters. Though there existed these groups in each of the tipais it was in Marudam that workers of different categories were found indispensable.

Perhaps Marudam was the region where the growth of sub-castes found a fertile field. While the indigenous divisions proceeded apace, the Āryan caste system in essentials might have mingled with the existing order. In actuality only the rise of the Brāhmin caste was the immediate effect of this change. The other sub-divisions of the Āryan caste system were later attempted to be yoked into the existing order. By the time of Tolkāppiyar, the four-fold system had been recognized and grafted into the indigenous order.<sup>118</sup>

The picture of society we get from Nāgīnai is on the whole that of a simple business community of people attending to their traditional occupations and leading a simple life. The importance of whole-hearted devotion to work was understood and appreciated. Acquisition of wealth by man was considered essential not only as a pre-requisite of entering wedlock but also for ensuring a happy and prosperous life. There are many references in Nāgīnai to the lover parting with his sweet-heart for the sake of earning wealth.<sup>119</sup>

Acquisition of wealth did not mean the making of a vast fortune. Need for ensuring the sustenance of the family was the sole aim kept in view. There is little evidence of vulgar worship of mammon. In fact, a lofty conception of wealth and its identification with nobility of character were recognised by the people of this age.

“ சான்றூர் செல்வம் என்பது சேர்ந்தோர்  
புன்கண் அஞ்சம் பண்யின்  
மென்கண் செல்வஞ் செல்வமென்பதுவே ”

It was held that fame, happiness and charity are all dependent upon wealth.<sup>120</sup> However, frequently it happened that persons were so intensely attached to their sweet-hearts that they refused to set out to other places in quest of wealth, because they were unwilling to face the ordeal of separation.<sup>121</sup> One

infatuated lover said that wealth was not superior to the enjoyment of the company of the girl of his heart.<sup>122</sup> On the other hand, there are several instances of the discerning girl compelling the lover to turn to his duty first and return after a successful acquisition of wealth.

#### *Customs:*

Narrinai throws light on certain customs which the Tamils had developed in the Saṅgam age. Though some customs were specially characteristic of each Tiṇai, there were certain common ones as well. Hospitality has always been a noted virtue among the Tamils. Its merit was greatly praised by poets of the Saṅgam age.<sup>123</sup> For guests who turned up even at dead of night the home was expected to provide a hospitable welcome.<sup>124</sup>

The children of the home formed a source of happiness to the family. An errant husband tries to appease his angry wife through the agency of his children.<sup>125</sup> The children endearingly called the father Yendai.<sup>126</sup> The custom of naming the son after his grand-father had come into vogue. Children appear to have been looked after with care. They were trained to walk with the aid of small toys like chariots with three wheels.<sup>127</sup>

In respect of the decoration of the house certain standards of cleanliness prevailed. There were small houses and thatched cottages on the one hand, and big-sized mansions on the other. Even in small houses there was a distinct apartment for the storage of paddy in Marudam, (St. 26) and very probably in other regions as well. After delivery the woman observed pollution for a period, at the end of which, she took an oil bath. For the sake of purification fragrant powders were used. For burning household lamps oil of the laurel was used.<sup>128</sup> Oil extracted from fish was used for burning lamps

in boats. There were physicians who treated illness. Pedestrians used to have umbrellas with them.<sup>129</sup> The practice of keeping corpses in pots is adverted to in Stanza 271.

*Religion :*

Certain facts concerning the religious beliefs and practices of the early Tamils can be gleaned from *Narrinai*. There was a widespread belief in spirits.<sup>130</sup> Offerings of food and flowers as well as animal sacrifices were made to spirits.<sup>131</sup> Worship of the spirits was primarily actuated by fear of the evil that might be caused by them. Some spirits were believed to reside in trees,<sup>132</sup> and others in forests and hills. Several references are found in *Narrinai* to a spirit in the form of a damsel residing in the hill called Kollimalai. This damsel is stated to have been a paragon of beauty.<sup>133</sup> The legendary genesis of this image was that it had been set up by divine agency in order to entice and destroy the *asuras* and *rākshasas* who had been harassing the devotees and saints of the place.

The spirits were supposed to be wandering up and down at the dead of night.<sup>134</sup> Rice offered to the gods at the *Manram* or the common place of the village was believed to be eaten by the spirits.<sup>135</sup>

Apart from the belief in spirits the idea of a personal God<sup>136</sup> had already taken a foot-hold. Muruga appears to have been one of the earliest gods worshipped by the Tamils. Whenever a person was in trouble Muruga was appealed to for protection. How the belief in spirits became merged with the worship of Muruga is seen from the popular faith in ‘Muruganāṅgu’ or ‘becoming possessed by Muruga’. The belief was that a person who was considered to have been possessed by Muruga became unwell physically and mentally, and that a special offering to the deity accompanied by goat sacrifice alone could restore the affected person to the normal state.<sup>137</sup>

The people had such a veneration for Muruga that the parties touched the image of this deity while pledges were taken. Evidently that was considered an assurance of truthful adherence to the pledge.<sup>138</sup>

Muruga, the hill god, was probably worshipped at first in the Kuṇīchi region. Reference is found in Narrinai to Valli, the Kuṛava spouse of Muruga.<sup>139</sup> The tradition had gained ground that Muruga was a valiant warrior,<sup>140</sup> though no reference is found here to the accredited Purāṇic story of his triumph over Śūrapadma. Nor is there any mention of Śiva in this classic. On the other hand, there is a reference to Māyōn or Viṣhṇu<sup>141</sup> and to his incarnation as Kṛṣṇa. Baladēva, too, the elder brother of Kṛṣṇa is found mentioned. These make it clear that the Āryan legends regarding Viṣhṇu had become assimilated with the religious lore of this time. This is further confirmed by the reference occurring in this work to the divine damsels supposed to be residing in Heaven at the top of the Himālayas. The reference in Stanza 356 to the divine damsels supposed to be residing in Heaven at the top of the Himālayas confirms that the Āryan legendary background had taken deep root in Tamil Nād.

The abstract conception of Divinity, too, had begun to take shape. The idea of God as the Universe is found reflected in the ideas of the times as seen from St. 240. Penance for the purpose realising god-head was known, and references occur in this anthology to devotees having become immersed in penance on hills.<sup>142</sup> However, it is undeniable that the underlying feature of the religious belief of the time was fear. Gods and spirits were supposed to cause evil when they were offended and periodic offerings were made to appease them.<sup>143</sup> Side by side with this, there had appeared faith in Fate and Karma.<sup>144</sup> Obviously this

presupposed a belief in previous life and in the doctrine of transmigration of the soul. Stanza 397 speaks of a loving girl wondering whether she might forget her sweet lover in the next birth should she be born as some creature other than a human being. It is notable that *Narrinai* does not indicate that any distinctive Jain or Buddhist idea had entered the faith of the people in this age.

#### *Superstitions :*

Not infrequently religious faith merged into superstitious beliefs. The early Tamils had developed their own superstitions, many of which have survived to this day. The chirping of the lizard was considered as a forecast of forthcoming events. The arrival of the lover at the expected time was, for instance, believed to be learnt from the chirping of the lizard.<sup>145</sup> The singing of the cuckoo, too, was another indication of happy things to come.<sup>146</sup> The cry of the crow was believed to foretell the arrival of guests.<sup>147</sup> The consequences of the evil eye were dreaded.<sup>148</sup>

#### *Conclusion :*

*Narrinai* thus yields certain valuable pieces of information regarding the political and social conditions of the Śāngam age. Unfortunately, the available data are not as full as one would wish. Nevertheless, it is possible to obtain a general picture of the life of the times. On the one hand, a study of the other classics from the historical standpoint may throw more light on the study of *Narrinai*, and on the other, the attempt at piecing together some of the details found in *Narrinai* may help the elucidation of similar or comparable data available in the rest of the classics.

## NOTES

1. Basham, A. L.: The Wonder that was India (1954), p. 463.
  2. See, for example, Sāmi Chidambaranār; ‘Eṭṭuttogaiyum Tamilar Paṇḍitum.’ (1957), p. 65, and ‘Narripai Chōrpolivugal,’ (1942), p. 136.
  3. “ நற்றினை கல்ல குறுங்தொகை யைங்குறுநா  
    கருத்த பதிற்றுப்பத் தோங்கு பரிபாடல்  
    கற்றறிந்தா ரேத்துங் கவியே யகம் புறமென்  
    நித்திரத்த வெட்டுத் தொகை ”, என்ப.
  4. See the author’s article on “The Brāhmaṇ Inscriptions of South India and the Śaṅgam Age,” Tamil Culture, Vol. V. No. 2.

“ நண்பாட்டுப் புலவனும்ச சங்கமேறி  
    நற்கனக்கிழி தருமிக்கருளி ஞேன் கான் ”

திருப்பத்தூர் திருத்தாண்டகம்.  
Tirupattūr Tiruttapḍagam. 2. 11. 2.

  6. Puram: 2; Aham: 168 and 233. It has been held by some scholars that Udiyam Chēral, the father of Imayavaramban, was different from Perumchōrputiyān since Padigṛuppattu does not refer to the latter designation in respect of Udiyam Chēral. But stanzas 168 and 233 of Ahanānūṭu show that the designation applies to the same king. See also ‘Silappadikāram, Canto 23 : 55, and Ibid, Canto 29 : Uśalvari.
  7. Chēran Cheiguṭtuvan is stated to have undertaken a naval expedition against the Kadambas who had been indulging in piracy. In the course of his expedition Cheiguṭtuvan captured the coastal town of Viyalūr, which was near Māndai. (Silappadikāram. Canto XXVIII. 11. 114-5). But as against this it must be remembered that Māndai had come under the Chēras as early as the time of Imayavaramban Neḍuñchēralaṭan. (See Aham. 127).
  8. Yānaichel probably meant a row of elephants, as may be inferred from the use of the term in Aham, 323.
  - 9a. Narripai—Stanza 18.

9b. Indian Antiquary, Vol. XXIX, p. 250. Note 2.

10. Kuruntogai, Stanza 258.
11. Sri P. Narayanaswami Aiyar has taken Periyan to stand for Titiyan of Tēraļundūr. Though Titiyan's name is not mentioned in the poem, the reference to the fight over the laurel indicates that Periyan is identical with Titiyan.
12. Anni's conflict with Titiyan is found described in Ahanānūru as well. In fact, the allusion to the struggle between the two chiefs would be unintelligible but for the details found in Ahanānūru. That a dispute arose between the two, over a laurel tree by Titiyan (Aham St. 45) and that consequent on Anni's cutting down of the tree a fight ensued between the two is evident (Aham. St. 126). Anni was killed in the struggle. But Sri Narayana Aiyar has misinterpreted two other references in Ahanānūru. Apparently stanzas 196 and 262 of Ahanānūru refer to earlier incidents. Instead of Sri Aiyar's view that Titiyan had plucked out an eye of Anni and that Miñili, Anni's son, in revenge killed Titiyan and his heirs, the proper interpretation seems to be that Anni's cows had trespassed into the cultivated fields of the Kōśar, who avenged it by plucking Anni's eyes. Mortified by this Anni-Miñili, the daughter of Anni adopted a life of renunciation and eventually had the Kōśar killed through the aid of Titiyan of Tēraļundūr.
13. Stanza 387. This king, famous for his military valour no less than for his learning and patronage of poets, encountered the combined forces of Yānaikkaṭchey Māntaram Chēral Irumpoṭai. Chōļan Rajasūyam Vēṭṭa Perunarkiṭṭi, Titiyan, Elini Erumayūrān and Iruṅgo Vēṇmān (Puram 72, 76, 77 and 79).
14. Numerous references to this chieftain of Podiyilmalai and his munificence are found in Puṇanānūru and Chiṭupāṇārruppaṭai
15. Ahanānūru, 209, Ll. 11-17.
16. Kāri was one of the seven paragons of charity of the later epoch. He used to present poets with gifts of chariots and was, therefore, called 'Tērvāṇmalayan' (Narrīpai 100). During his rule Āryas of the north are stated to have been repulsed by Kāri when they attacked his territory. But jealous of his increasing might, Adiyamān Añji of Tagadūr besieged and captured Kōvalūr. The vanquished Kāri took refuge under

Peruñchēral Irumporai who helped him to attack and defeat Ōri of Kollimalai. Kāri faithfully passed on Ōri's territories to the Chēra kings. Later Kāri induced Irumporai to attack Tagadūr of Añji. This was successfully undertaken by Irumporai, who defeating and killing Añji, passed on Kōvalūr to Kāri.

17. Ahanānūru. St. 352. When he was attacked by an enemy, he became frightened and was obliged to take shelter in a forest. He appears to have been called Añji on account of that circumstance. (Ahanānūru 115).
18. Padigruppattu, 8th Decad.
19. Puñanānūru, 99.
20. Once he delayed giving gifts to the poetess Auvvai, who, thereupon became enraged. (Puram, 206). Learning this, he himself approached her and gave her an abundant supply of paddy, clothes and other requirements, upon which she sang in praise of Añji (*Ibid*, 390). When he captured Tirukkōvalūr, Paraþar composed verses in his honour. (Aham, 372). In the battle at Kolikkūram where he fought against the combined forces of the Chōla and Pāñya, he was mortally wounded. (Puñam 93).
21. The king was not expected to tax his subjects excessively. Stanza 226.
22. Whether Māran Vañuti was identical with Ukkirapperu Vañuti or Pannāñu tanda Māran Vañuti, it is difficult to determine.
23. History of the Tamils (1929), p. 4.
24. eg. Stanza 13 is appropriate to Marudam in terms of Uripporu but the Karupporu pertains to Kurinchi.
25. Tol. Ahattiñai Iyal, 15. Whether Tolkāppiyam was or was not anterior to the Eñuttogai is still a matter of controversy.
26. Tol. Poruñadhikāram—St. 236. A sound mind is necessary for the lady's friend since she has the duty of dispelling the lady's distress.
27. Tol. Poruñadhikāram, 96, 206,
28. Tol. Poruñadhikāram, *Ibid*.
29. Kañaviyal Sūtram, 143.

30. See for eg. Stanzas 25 and 26.

*Note :* St. 46 where the companion of a loving girl says that it would not be proper to abandon pleasure on hand for the sake of wealth which is fleeting.

31. When the girl was unwell, her mother prescribed as a remedy, the cool water from the hill which belonged to the lover of the girl. Stanza 53. That is a subtle indication that the mother knew all about the affair.

32. Stanza 4.

33. Stanza 297 shows how the mother vehemently protested against the association with her lover.

34. eg. Sts. 34, 173, 244, 268, 274, 282, 288, 322, 373, and 376.

35. Stanzas 173, 258 and 288.

36. Stanza 34 is interesting, for, while the mother suspects Añangu, the girl appeals to Muruga in order to clear the doubt.

37. Stanzas 36, 203, 227, 263, 271 and 272.

38. Stanzas 144 and 285.

39. Stanza 63.

40. Stanza 275,

41. eg. Stanzas 342 and 377.

42. Stanza 152.

43. Stanza 146.

44. Stanza 220.

45. Stanza 45.

46. Stanza 266.

47. Stanza 300.

48. Stanza 22.

49. Stanza 206.
50. Stanza 207.
51. Stanza 93.
52. Nor do we find reference to it in the other Śaṅgam works. But commentators of Tolkāppiyam suggest that it had come into vogue at an early age.
53. Stanza 380.
54. Stanza 30.
55. Stanza 100.
56. Stanza 350; Stanzas 260, 340 and 360 also refer to the protests of the wife.
57. [Stanzas 300 and 320.]
58. Stanza 320.
59. Stanza 266.
60. Stanza 289.
61. Stanza 42.
62. Stanza 290.
63. [Stanza 43.]
64. Stanza 120.
65. Stanzas 213, 326 and 353.
66. Stanza 85.
67. Stanza 85. Majjlar are known to have burnt snails and eaten them. See also Stanza 280.
68. Stanza 114.
69. Stanza 336.
70. Stanza 41.
71. Stanzas 156, 295 and 303.

72. Stanza 239.
73. Stanza 388.
74. Eg. Stanzas 8, 123 and 349.
75. Stanza 60.
76. Stanza 64.
77. Stanzas 264 and 265.
78. Stanzas 96 and 198.
79. eg. Stanzas 271, 284, 308, 316 and 370.
80. Stanza 321.
81. Stanzas 168, 250 and 314.
82. Stanza 225.
83. Stanzas 23 and 239.
84. Stanza 56.
85. Stanza 12. The Chilambu or anklet was worn before the girl attained puberty. A ceremony celebrating the shedding of this ornament was held before she came of age. See Stanza 279.
86. Stanza 66.
87. Stanza 274.
88. Stanza 286.
89. Stanza 297.
90. Stanza 296.
91. Stanza 3.
92. Stanza 324.
93. Stanza 305.
94. Stanza 191.
95. Stanzas 90 and 368.

96. Stanza 44.
97. Stanza 68.
98. *Ibid.*
99. Stanza 50.
100. Stanza 276,
101. Stanza 22.
102. Stanza 202.
103. Stanzas 209 and 311.
104. eg. Stanzas 4, 138 and 331.
105. Stanzas 183 and 254.
106. Stanza 352. See also Stanzas 164 and 362.
107. Stanza 258. In the hunt when they came across a whale there was jubilation.
108. Stanzas 175 and 215.
109. Stanza 353.
110. Stanza 353.
111. Stanza 84, (commentary).
112. Stanzas 84 and 12.
113. Stanza 12.
114. Stanza 12.
115. Stanzas 133, 153 and 363.
116. Stanza 200.
117. Stanza 276.
118. Tol. Porul. Stanza 142.
119. eg. St. 41, 229.
120. Stanza 214.
121. Stanzas 3, 16.
122. Stanza 52.
123. Stanza 120.

- 124. Stanza 142.
  - 125. Stanza 138.
  - 126. Stanza 221.
  - 127. Stanza 250.
  - 128. Stanza 278.
  - 129. Stanza 374.
  - 130. Stanzas 255 and 398.
  - 131. Stanza 251 and 358.
  - 132. Stanza 343.
  - 133. Stanzas 192 and 201.
  - 134. Stanzas 192, 301 and 319.
  - 135. Stanza 73.
  - 136. Stanza 9.
  - 137. Stanza 251.
  - 138. Stanza 386.
  - 139. Stanza 82.
  - 140. Stanza 34.
  - 141. Stanza 32.
  - 142. Stanzas 141 and 226.
  - 143. Stanza 189.
  - 144. Stanza 185. See Stanzas 88 and 107. It was believed that a person's wealth and ability in this life depended on the beneficence that he had done in his previous life. (Stanza 210.)
  - 145. Stanzas 98, 169 and 333.
  - 146. Stanza 246.
  - 147. Stanza 367.
  - 148. Stanza 155.
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## X. Tamil Literature as a Source Material of History

It is indisputable that professedly historical works are conspicuous by their absence in early India. Several writers, commencing with Ālberūṇi, the discerning scholar who visited the country in the 11th century A.D., have observed that Indians of the past, despite their high intellectual attainments, lacked the historic spirit. This feature is as much true of the Tamils as of the rest of the Indians.

However, the Śaṅgam classics, comprising the extant literary works of the early Tamils, contain extraordinarily abundant data of historical value. They throw some light on the political, and still more on the social and religious conditions of the early Tamils. But the determination of the chronology of the Śaṅgam age on the one hand, and the sifting of the historical data from the vast mass of miscellaneous material on the other, is by no means easy. The origin of the Śaṅgam, the celebrated literary Academy, is itself enshrouded in mystery.

### I. *The Śaṅgam*

The earliest account of the Śaṅgam appears in the Commentary on the *Iraiyanār Ahapporul* (Grammar of Tamil Poetry)<sup>1</sup> which is not assignable to a date earlier than 8th century A.D. Moreover, it is coloured by the belief in the supernatural agency. It speaks of three successive Śaṅgams which lasted altogether for 9,990 years and had in the aggregate 8,598 poets, who included certain gods as well! On the face of it this account is incredible.

Nevertheless, the entire tradition concerning the Academy does not seem to have been a fiction, for in the first place, traditions do not arise normally without any basis. Secondly, certain kings and poets figure in more than one classic of the Śaṅgam age. Apparently, fact and fiction seem to have become mixed up in the account recorded in the *Commentary on the Iraiyānār Ahapporū*. While it is quite probable that an academy of poets flourished under the patronage of the Pāṇḍyan kings, as mentioned in the *Vēlvikkudi grant*,<sup>2</sup> many of the details concerning the Śaṅgam are clearly figments of the mythmakers' imagination.

It is not possible to determine whether there existed three Śaṅgams or only one. The legend that the Pāṇḍyan kings changed their capitals twice before they settled in the present Madurai, is supported partly by the reference in the *Mahābhārata* and by the evidence of Pliny.<sup>3</sup> The fact of the three capitals was perhaps responsible for the legend of the three Śaṅgams. Tradition is, however, persistent that the two earlier Śaṅgams had produced numerous literary works, most of which have perished and that the extant classics are mainly the products of the third Śaṅgam. It must be admitted that it is impossible to arrive at a finality in respect of this question.

*Chronological Basis* : Nor do the extant Śaṅgam works provide a firm chronological foothold for the history of the early Tamils. The determination of the age of the Śaṅgam has proved a vexed problem, for speculation on it has ranged from 500 B.C. to A.D. 500 not to speak of the extreme views on its upper and lower limits.<sup>4</sup> Doubtless, the Academy flourished prior to the 7th century A.D. because of the Śaiva hymnists, Sambandar and Appar, who were the contemporaries of Pallava Narasimhavarman I of 7th century A.D. refer to the Śaṅgam.<sup>5</sup> Besides it is obvious

that several centuries must have intervened before the rather archaic style of the Śāṅgam works attained the simple pattern of the devotional hymns of the 7th century A.D. Then again, it is unlikely that between the 4th and 6th centuries A.D., when Tamilaham was under the chaos caused by the Kalabhra eruption, the Śāṅgam would have flourished under the patronage of the Pāṇḍyan kings.

In fact, the generally accepted view which assigns the Śāṅgam to the early centuries of the Christian era seems to be based on valid grounds.<sup>6</sup> Besides the *Gajabāhu* *Senuguttuvan* synchronism, the so-called sheet-anchor of South Indian chronology, which ascribes the events embodied in the *Silappadikāram* to the 2nd century A.D., the remarkable coincidence of the Tamil literary references with the data furnished by the Greek geographers of the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D., reinforced by the discovery of the Roman coins of that period in South India lends support to this view. However, this conclusion has recently been challenged on the ground that the South Indian Brāhmī inscriptions of the 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C., reveal Tamil of a crude form and that the well-developed language of the Śāṅgam classics could not have appeared prior to A.D. 500.<sup>7</sup> But this challenge is based on a doubtful hypothesis. The language of these inscriptions represents a hybrid of Prākṛit and Tamil and not the real Tamil of the age.<sup>8</sup>

The extant Śāṅgam literature comprises the eight anthologies called *Eṭṭuttogai* of short lyrics and the Ten Idylls known as *Pattuppāṭṭu*.<sup>9</sup> These poems are broadly classifiable into two groups, viz., those called ‘*Puram*’ works which deal with external matters like war and patronage of king and ‘*Aham*’ works which concern themselves with love.<sup>10</sup> The anthologies and Idylls were no doubt compiled several centuries after the Śāṅgam age. Further, all the works in each

of these categories were not composed at the same time either. Even verses in the *Puranānūru* belong to different periods of time within the Śaṅgam age. *Kalittogai* and *Paripādal* seem to be later than *Ahanānūru*, while *Tirumurugārruppādalai* among the Ten Idylls was unquestionably a late composition, posterior to the 3rd century A.D.

According to tradition the *Eighteen Minor works* called *Patinenkilkāṇakku*, as well as the two great epics, *Maṇimekalai* and *Silappadikāram*, are classed among the Śaṅgam classics. But the language as well as the ideas contained in most of them indicate a later date for them. However, all the ‘18 didactic poems,’ as they are described, do not belong to the same time, though they were grouped together because of the ‘venbā’ metre in which all these poems were composed. Tradition which assigns the celebrated *Kural* to the Śaṅgam age might well be true to fact.<sup>11</sup> That *Kural* speaks of love marriages typical of the Śaṅgam age as contrasted with those of the *Silappadikāram* epoch is a pointer in this direction. *Kural* (verse 475) mentions the example of the cart loaded with the feathers of peacocks; it is suggestive of the cart loads of feathers sent abroad during the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D. Again, *Kaṭavali*, another of the 18 minor works, was not far removed from the date of one verse in *Puranānūru* (v. 74). But *Tirukāḍugam* and *Śirupañcamūlam* are the latest in the series and were composed in the 9th century A.D. The references to *Peru Muttaraiyar* in *Nāladiyār* indicate the contemporaneity of the work with these chieftains of the 9th century.

The twin epics are anterior to many of the 18 didactic works, although the tradition which assigns them to the Śaṅgam age seems unacceptable. The themes of the epics belong in all probability to the 2nd century A.D. The political background of the stories, and in particular the *Gajabāhu*

*Seṅguṭṭuvan* synchronism, indicate this. The supernatural element in the epics apart, the principal events mentioned in *Silappadikāram* could well have occurred in the 2nd century A.D. The omission of the Pallavas in the political picture confirms it. Some time after, popular imagination had spun stories out of the events, talented poets would have shaped them into epic form. Besides the larger proportion of Sanskrit words than in the early Tamil literature, the improved forms of the language, the appearance of the northern pattern of marriage ceremonies and the prominent role assigned to the festival of Indra in *Silappadikāram*, all indicate a later date for the epics than for the Śaṅgam works.<sup>12</sup> It is interesting to find that a recent writer proceeding on astronomical data furnished by *Silappadikāram* and its famous commentator, *Adiyārkunallār*, suggests A.D. 465 as the date for the composition of the epic.<sup>13</sup>

*Maṇimēkalai* is totally Buddhist in its setting and though it is not indisputably established that Dinnāga's *Nyāyapravēśa* had influenced the epic, the Buddhistic philosophy of 3rd and 4th centuries A.D. is clearly discernible in it.<sup>14</sup> *Maṇimēkalai* reveals that Kāñci had become a centre of Buddhist learning. It may be recalled that Buddhist and Jain devotees had found their way into South India as early as the 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C. On the whole there is little justification for assigning the epics to a period later than the 5th century A.D.; in all probability they belong to the 4th or 5th century A.D.<sup>15</sup>

#### *Historical value of the literature :*

Against the chronological background outlined above, the historical value of the different classes of early Tamil literature may be assessed. Among the Śaṅgam classics, *Purana-nūru*, *Pattuppāṭṭu* and *Padippuppattu* are the most important works for the reconstruction of the people's history. Though

the *Aham* poems which deal with love, occasionally advert to historical events and social customs, they are not as full and vivid in these aspects as the *Puram* works in general.

The short lyrics of *Ettuttogai* furnish a clue to the date, authorship of the poems and the occasion for their composition by means of a colophon appended to each poem. The Idylls also provide similar epilogues, padigams, as they are called, but generally they are far too brief and little more than the authors' names are available from them. Among the *Ettuttogai* collections themselves the historical value of the colophons is not uniformly of the same character. The padigams of the *Padiruppattu* appear to have been appended long after the poems were composed, for they mention important facts which are not found in the poems. For instance, Śengutūvan's northern expedition, the most important achievement ascribed to him by *Silappadikāram*, is found mentioned in the padigam of the 5th Decad and not in the poem itself.

Far different is the case of the colophons in *Puranānūru*, since they seem to have appeared contemporaneously with the poems themselves.<sup>16</sup> Besides, there is no valid reason for disputing the claim registered in the colophons of *Puranānūru* that the poems were contemporary compositions dealing with particular situations to which the poets themselves were eye witnesses. If this claim is true, the historical value of the work is great.

A remarkable feature about the *Puram* poems is that they deal with the situations in an objective and realistic manner. There is little of the conventional pattern either in their themes or in their treatment of the subject as we find in later poems. It is important to observe that the Śaṅgam poets were not petty minded supplicants who praised their patron s indiscriminately. There are a number of courageous

outbursts of poets expressing their contempt of those rulers who failed to treat them in the befitting manner.<sup>17</sup> Thus the poets maintained their self-respect, despite their poverty. Their poems were generally true to their convictions, though extravagant praises of generous patrons have occasionally found their way into the poems.

A principal drawback of the data provided by the Śaṅgam works is that a continuous political history of the dynasties of the age cannot be reconstructed, for it is difficult to determine the genealogy or chronological relationship of the kings who figure in the classics. The Pāṇḍya, Chōḷa and Chēra dynasties dominate Tamilaham in their respective divisions, while in between their territories, there ruled several minor chieftains. But the achievements of prominent rulers and incidentally the character of monarchy are about the only data of political history which can be gathered from the poems.

*The Pāṇḍyas:* References to several Pāṇḍyan kings are found in the Śaṅgam poems. *Maduraikkāñci*, for instance, speaks of two kings, *Nediyōn*<sup>18</sup> and *Palyāgaśālai Mudukudumi*,<sup>19</sup> but unquestionably the hero of the poem is *Neduñjeliyan* who won the famous victory at *Talayālaṅgānam* against a combination of the contemporary Chēra and Chōḷa kings and five minor chiefs. Unfortunately it is not possible to determine the distance of time which intervened between this *Neduñjeliyan* and the king of the same name *Āryappaḍai-kadanda Neduñjeliyan*, figuring in *Silappadikāram*.

The victor of *Talayālaṅgānam* is praised also in numerous poems in *Puarnānūru*,<sup>20</sup> *Ahanānūru*,<sup>21</sup> *Kuruntogai*<sup>22</sup> and *Narrinai*.<sup>23</sup> An ambitious warrior, a generous patron of poets, and a staunch Hindu who performed a Vēdic sacrifice, *Neduñjeliyan* was one of the outstanding Pāṇḍyan kings, celebrated in the Śaṅgam classics.

Among the successors of *Neduñjeliyan* known to Tamil literature there appears *Ugraperuvaluti*, a valiant warrior who subdued his opponent, the chief of *Kānappēr*.<sup>24</sup> A poet of eminence, he himself, is believed to have caused the anthology of *Ahanānūru* to be made. Another Pāṇḍyan king, famous in the Śaṅgam literature is the poet king *Bhūtappāṇḍiyān* who captured Ollaiyūr.<sup>25</sup> An able warrior, a generous and affectionate friend as well as a loving husband, he was an enlightened ruler. The names of several other Pāṇḍyan monarchs occur in the classics; but few details about them are available.

*The Chōlas*: The data regarding the Chōlas do not differ radically in character from those on the Pāṇḍyas. A continuous history of the kings and their rule is not possible to be reconstructed. The schemes of genealogy attempted by V. Kanakasabhai and M. Raghava Aiyangar are not fully supported by the available sources.<sup>26</sup>

As among the Pāṇḍyas, certain Chōla kings stand out prominently in the poems. *Karikālā* is clearly the most outstanding personality among all the monarchs of the age. His brilliant victory at Ven̄ṇi against the Chēra and Pāṇḍyas sovereigns<sup>27</sup> as well as his triumph over a confederacy of nine minor chieftains in a battle at *Vākaipparan-dalai*<sup>28</sup> and finally the havoc caused by his forces in the territories of his enemies<sup>29</sup> are all vividly described. *Karikālā*'s development of irrigation and his promotion of trade and industry in *Kāverippūmpattinam* receive special treatment in *Paṭṭinappālai*.<sup>30</sup> His exploits are mentioned also in *Puranānūru*, *Porunarāyyuppadai*, *Maṇimēkalai* and *Silappadikāram*.<sup>31</sup> Many of his achievements specified in literature are echoed in later inscriptions like the *Malepaṭu Plates*, *Anbil Plates*, *Tiruvālaṅgadu Plates*, *Larger Leyden grant* and the *Kanyā-kumari inscription*.

It may be observed that many legends have gathered around the personality of *Karikāla* in the post-Śaṅgam period. Later literature, as seen from *Kalingattupparani*, *Vikramachōlan Ulā* and *Rājarājachōlan Ulā*, all of the 12th century A.D., present embellished accounts, which are clearly legendary in character. While *Karikāla* of the Śaṅgam works appears a realistic personality, he becomes enveloped in an admixture of legends and facts in later literature.<sup>32</sup>

A Chōla king who ruled considerably later than *Karikāla* was *Kōcceṅganṇan*, the Śaiva devotee, whose victory at the battle of *Kalumalam* against the Chēra ruler *Kaṇaikkāl Irumporai* is found described in a rather conventional manner in *Kaṭavali*. The author of *Kaṭavali*, called *Poygaiyār*, a benefactor of the Chēra king, cannot be identified, as has been done, with the celebrated *Vaiṣṇava* saint, *Poygai Ālvār*, since the battle of *Kalumalam* is mentioned in *Purānānūru*,<sup>33</sup> where it is stated that the vanquished Chēra king himself composed that verse.<sup>34</sup>

*The Chēras*: The only dynasty about which a fairly consecutive genealogy can be constructed by the aid of the early Tamil literature is that of the Chēras. *Padirṛupattu* (Ten Decads) concern themselves entirely with the achievements of the Chēra kings. Of the original collection, unfortunately the first and last Decads have been lost. Each of the remaining Decads deals with the achievement of a particular Chēra monarch. *Padirṛupattu* furnishes a dynastic list of the Chēra kings and the duration of each reign. K. G. Sesha Aiyar has made a commendable attempt at constructing a chronological framework. But he encounters certain difficulties, which he tries to overcome by means of certain hypotheses, some of which are clearly untenable.<sup>35</sup>

A serious obstacle to the framing of a succession list of the kings is that there were two lines of Chēras, one

ruling at *Vañchi* and the other at *Tondi*, simultaneously for the most part. The exact relationship of the members of the collateral branch with those of the main line is not ascertainable in every case; nor is the capital of every ruler specifically mentioned. Moreover, the date of the Chēra rule in terms of known chronology is not easily determinable, for *Padiruppattu* does not provide its account in terms of any era. Sesha Aiyar's basic date, viz., A. D. 125, the opening year of Śenгуṭṭuvan's reign, is based on the Gajabāhu Śenğuṭṭuvan synchronism.

Of the eight Chēra kings whose achievements are described in *Padiruppattu*, clearly Śenğuṭṭuvan is the most outstanding personality. The famous poet, *Paranar* has devoted the 5th Decad to this sovereign, while many of his achievements are echoed *Silappadikāram*. Śenğuṭṭuvan's northern conquests, his defeat of Nannan, the Vēlir chieftain, his overthrow of a confederacy of nine Chōlas at Nerivāyil and his triumph over the *Kongar* are all mentioned in the epic.<sup>36</sup> Śenğuṭṭuvan was a devout Hindu who performed the Vēdic sacrifices and worshipped both *Siva* and *Viṣṇu*.<sup>37</sup> Śenğuṭṭuvan was, in all probability, a kinsman of *Karikāla*. From the references to these monarchs in *Padiruppattu* and *Silappadikāram*, it seems that *Karikāla* was the maternal great-grand-father of Śenğuṭṭuvan.

*Puranānūru* speaks of nine more Chēra kings besides those mentioned in *Padiruppattu*. The reason for the omission of these names remains a mystery. Perhaps the 1st and last Decads mention some or all of the rest; or more probably several of the Chēras mentioned in *Puranānūru* were subordinate chiefs. However, it is significant that a few of the names found in *Puranānūru* occur in *Ahanānūru* as well.<sup>38</sup> Since the padigam of the 2nd Decad states that

Udiyam Chēral was the father of Imayavaramban Nedūñ-chēralātan who is the hero of that Decad, it is likely that Udiyam Chēral was the hero of the first Decad. Thus while the historical data regarding the Chēras is more adequate than in respect of the other two dynasties there remain insoluble problems which make even the history of the Chēras far from complete or satisfactory.

*Minor Chieftains*: Several minor chieftains who ruled in various parts of the Tamil country are mentioned in the classics. The most prominent among them are Āy Andiran and Pāri, both renowned for heroism and patronage of poets. Though we come across the names of five other chieftains who, along with Andiran and Pāri, constituted the seven ‘Vallals’ (paragons of generosity), it is not possible to construct the genealogical line of these chieftains or determine their relationship with the rulers of the principal dynasties.

Thus, evaluating the literary source for the political history, it is found that though details are known about the achievements of several monarchs in each dynasty, the material is not adequate enough to help a systematic reconstruction of history. The knowledge of the Chēras is more full and continuous than that of the rest, but even here the lacunae are not inconsiderable. Nor can all the details furnished about the kings be considered historical. While the references to kings are realistic and sober in comparison with the data in later literature, it must be admitted that all poetic accounts have inherent limitations as a source of history. For one thing the focus of attention on the part of the poet would not have been the same as that of a chronicler or historian.<sup>39</sup>

Doubtless the inferences deducible from the literature about the general character of monarchy and the ideals and aspirations which guided the rulers are interesting. Kings

were generally war-minded and wars were frequent. Heroism in war was held up as a great virtue. Death in the field of battle, valiantly fighting to the last, was considered a meritorious end for a ruler. The Chēra king Ātan II who was wounded on the back on the battlefield committed suicide on that account. Details concerning the army corps of the early Tamil kings, the different stages of an expedition, the pattern of military training and the ethics of warfare are all available from the early literature.<sup>40</sup>

There was a lofty conception of royal duties. The maintenance of impartial justice, protection of the poor and the helpless, the promotion of the economic well-being of the subjects<sup>41</sup> and the performance of religious rites for the sake of the people's welfare<sup>42</sup> were considered their legitimate duties. The *Kural* provides a systematic exposition of the responsibilities of an ideal king.<sup>43</sup>

It would seem that kings were remarkably enlightened. Invariably all kings were patrons of the learned. Even more interesting is the fact that many kings themselves were poets. Many of the early Pāndyan monarchs and those of some other dynasties too, were gifted poets. The kings were intimately associated with poets, some of whom acted as advisers or messengers of the monarchs. The royal custom of according a warm reception to the wandering minstrels, Pānar as they were called, contributed to the lively maintenance of the arts of poetry and dance.

The impression which the poems give us is that the monarch was an autocrat. But in reality, with the restraining influence of the poets and ministers and with a growing reverence for custom, the king was an ideal ruler suited to the times. Whether the groups of advisers called 'aimperunguļu' and 'enperayam' denoted councils of representatives

or merely attendants on the king, there is little doubt that the ruler was guided and influenced by several competent persons.

References to ‘manram,’ ‘podiyl’ and ‘avai’ in the classics suggest that there were frequent gatherings of the people. It is not possible to ascertain what role they played in the political life of the land. But it is presumable that they constituted a type of folk gathering where the people indicated their wishes. It cannot but be regretted that the light thrown on the political life of the common people is not adequate.

*Social Life*: It is concerning social life that an amazing wealth of material is provided by literature. True, the matter is available but indirectly. Incidental to the description of personalities or events there appear details of social habits, customs, religious institutions and practices and developments of arts and education. Normally, the more casual and indirect the data, the more true and faithful is the picture obtained. In comparison with professional history it suffers in one respect; it lacks a sense of proportion. Those details which are of great interest to the historian might or might not receive attention at the hands of the poets.

It is important to remember that for the most part, the Saṅgam poems were not produced by persons who pursued poetry for its own sake. Many of the poems came from the ‘Pāṇar,’ the professional class of minstrels, who were the roving bards of the time. Some of them were poets of real merit, while others were musicians, who along with their womenfolk went about visiting kings and chieftains, delighting them with their songs and dances. They praised the liberal patrons while they condemned boldly those who were not warm or generous to them.

As a source of social history the early poems have their shortcomings. They do not touch upon all aspects of social life. Nor do they afford a connected picture of the past, throwing light on the changes which occurred from time to time. Historical averaging, which inevitably contains inaccuracies may be the result; it may provide an unreal appearance of flat uniformity and absence of change. In order to avoid this danger, it is necessary to limit our observations to the time indicated by the specific sources of information, except in such cases where there is definite evidence of the continuance of an institution or practice once established. For instance, meat and liquor were quite commonly used in the Śaṅgam age; in the period of the epics they were condemned by moralists. Again, it is doubtful whether all the intricate patterns of dance described in *Silappadikāram* were known to the Śaṅgam age.<sup>44</sup>

Here it is not possible to give a full picture of the social habits and customs gleaned from the early Tamil literature. The general character of the data available from the literary works, illustrated by a few examples, is all that can be indicated. Among the Śaṅgam works unquestionably *Puranānūru* and *Pattuppāṭṭu* afford the most abundant data for the social historian, though the other classics, too, are occasionally helpful.

The houses of the people in different strata of society, as well as the palaces of kings, are found described.<sup>45</sup> Food and clothing find numerous references.<sup>46</sup> Meat and liquor were commonly used in the Śaṅgam age,<sup>47</sup> but by the time of the epics a tendency to prohibit their use is clearly in evidence.<sup>48</sup> Men and women dressed their hair with oil.<sup>49</sup> *Kuriñjippāṭṭu* mentions the custom of women arranging their hair in five

braids.<sup>50</sup> References to the habit of wearing *sandals* as foot-wear are found.<sup>51</sup> The habit of chewing betel leaves with lime and arecanut, prevalent in the Saṅgam age, continued in the period of the epics<sup>52</sup> and still later.

Descriptions of the agriculture and trade of the Tamils appear in numberless places in the classics.<sup>53</sup> While the life of the people belonging to the five natural divisions of the land is described in many of the Saṅgam works, the habits and customs of the *Paradavar*, the fishermen in Neydal, are vividly portrayed in *Maduraikkāñci* and *Patiṇinappālai*.<sup>54</sup>

Occupation was the basis of division into castes among the early Tamils. But even as early as the age of *Purānā-nūru* it is seen that the Āryan four-fold classification had found its way into the Tamil Country. The result was that from about the Saṅgam age onwards there commenced the fusion of the indigenous and imported systems.<sup>55</sup> *Purānā-nūru*, while mentioning the pre-Āryan castes also refers to the brāhmaṇins and their high social position.<sup>56</sup> By the time of the epics the amalgam of the two systems of caste had taken firm root, and what is more, the multiplication of subcastes had proceeded to an inordinate extent.<sup>57</sup>

Two forms of marriage, (marriage in secrecy and marriage in the open) were in vogue among the Tamils from early times. But beginning perhaps from the Saṅgam age these undergo a change and by the time of the epics the forms of Āryan marriage, together with fire rites seem to have become established in the Tamil country.<sup>58</sup> But it is important to observe that some of them were adopted by the brāhmaṇins as well. For example, the ancient usage of the bride-groom tying *tāli* (marriage symbol) around the neck of the bride,<sup>59</sup> as well as *Sati* and the tonsure of widows<sup>60</sup> were continued side by side with the Āryan rituals and ceremonies.

There is little doubt that in the Śāṅgam age woman was held in high esteem; she was considered the luminary of the home. *Pattuppāṭṭu* reveals that women enjoyed freedom and that they moved about in public without affecting prudery. ‘*Perumpāṇārruppadai*,’ in particular throws much light on this question.<sup>61</sup> It describes, for instance, how girls in the *brāhmaṇin* villages sported in ponds, women mingled freely in the village festivals and how rich ladies participated in certain pastimes and amusements of their own. Of course, all through the ages, unstinting devotion to the husband was the high ideal of virtue held up for women. This is admirably emphasised in the celebrated *Kūraṭ*, though several earlier works also touch upon it.

Side by side with the high ideals for women who led the household life there existed harlots or public women, who enticed rich young men for the sake of their money. The Śāṅgam works themselves speak of the harlots and the low social position they occupied. It is needless to add that by the time of the epics the institution had taken a firm root in the country.

The amusements and pastimes of the people reveal at once their rustic simplicity and robust outlook on life. While boys and girls had numerous kinds of interesting games,<sup>62</sup> adults enjoyed manly sports and physical contests, besides the training for warfare, which was provided in certain village organisations. Cock-fights and ram-fights were common amusements which attracted vast crowds of enthusiastic spectators. Festivals were common. For example, during summer there appeared the *Kāmavēṭ* festival in honour of Kāma, the god of Love. By the days of *Silappadikāram* the pastimes and festivals had increased in their number and variety.<sup>63</sup> Festivals in honour of gods like *Muruga*, *Korravai* and *Viṣṇu*, not to speak of the grand festival of *Indra*, all assume a great importance.

It was a common practice even in the Śaṅgam age for monarchs and the rich to enjoy their leisure by listening to songs and poems of minstrels and poets, while sitting in pavilions in front of their mansions. Minstrels were provided with food and robes as well as presents of gold. Dancers also vied with each other in the display of their arts in these gatherings.<sup>64</sup>

The progress made by the early Tamils in the arts of dancing, music and poetry was remarkable. The ubiquitous *Pāṇar* and *Viraliyar*, the roving bards, played a great part in the development of these arts. Many of the early classics furnish vivid descriptions of these arts as they flourished in the country. Tradition has it that several ancient Tamil classics on music have perished. However, there is little doubt that all these fine arts attained a high degree of perfection in the age of the Epics. Very graphic descriptions of the patterns of dance, the systematic training provided, the forms of music, vocal and instrumental, the wide variety of instruments are all described in *Silappadikāram*.<sup>65</sup> The *Pāṇar* and *Viraliyar* do not appear in the Epic period as during the Śaṅgam age. Apparently the artists had given up their roving missions and had settled down in towns.

It is also noticeable that by the epoch of *Silappadikāram*, the fine arts of music and dance<sup>66</sup> became associated with temples besides palaces and village parks. Temples existed no doubt in the Śaṅgam period itself but they became more numerous and popular in the later epoch. The early religious beliefs and observances are found reflected in the classics including *Tolkāppiyam*, the work on grammar, which tradition places among the earliest productions of the Śaṅgam. There is no invocation in *Tolkāppiyam* to any God as we find in later works. It is clear that the people of the age believed in a Supreme God and in a three-fold Trinity. But it is

remarkable that their Trinity was not identical with that of the Āryans. The early Tamils had belief in several minor gods, too. References to *Daivam*, *Dēvar*, and *Imaiyar*, all signifying ‘god’, indicate this and provide testimony to the Āryan influence. *Muruga* and *Korṛavai* appear to have been the most prominent deities of the early Tamils. Temples for *Muruga* were erected on top of hills as well as on the river side. The appearance of Āryan ideas, noticeable in *Tolkāppiyam* and *Puranānūru*, becomes increasingly prominent. In *Tirumurugārruppādai*, which was chronologically the last of the ‘*Pattuppāttu*’ and which was composed in honour of *Muruga*, the god is identified with *Kārtigēśa*, the Āryan god of six faces and twelve arms. *Korṛavai*, the war goddess of the Tamils, merges into the Āryan goddess *Durga*. A similar process is noticed in respect of several other deities. But it is still an open question whether the *Śiva* of the Dravidians was adopted by the Āryans and given a new position in their pantheon. One thing is clear. A fusion, particularly marked in the sphere of religion, was taking place between the Tamilian and Āryan ideas and practices and this fusion became more and more marked as time passed. Even *pūja* is stated to have been derived from the Tamil words *Pū+šeī* i.e. the offer of flowers.

When we come to the period of the twin Epics, we notice the full-fledged fusion of Āryan and Dravidian religious practices. In addition to the gods already worshipped by the people there now figured *Balarāma*,<sup>67</sup> *Varuna* and *Indra*. *Dēvi* was worshipped not only in the form of *Korṛavai* but also as *Lakṣmi*, *Sarasvati* and *Pārvati*.

Thus Tamil literature, which constitutes the only source of information, provides valuable data for the social history of the people. Care has to be taken, however, in utilising

them, particularly in relation to chronology. The basic conditions, as revealed by the Saṅgam classics, together with the changes reflected in the 18 minor works and the Epics, can be reconstructed with a fair measure of accuracy. It is important in this connection to remember that the literature of a particular period not only portrays contemporary life and events but may also embody in it earlier traditions. And a clear sifting of the one from the other is not always easy. Thus, subject to all these limitations, the social history of the early Tamils is possible to be reconstructed with the help of their literature.

Historical writing was conspicuous by its absence in Tamil, as in other Indian languages, including Sanskrit. Several writers have deplored the lack of historic sense on the part of the Hindus. R. C. Majumdar, the well-known historian of India says: "Historiography was practically unknown to the Hindus at the beginning of the nineteenth century." In spite of the large production of literary works, history as such received scant attention through the ages. One reason for this unfortunate circumstance was the domination of religion over all fields of thought and literary activity. In respect of Tamil literature this feature appeared more predominantly after the 7th century A.D. than earlier. Secondly, the didactic aim which motivated literary productions also vitiated an objective approach. Often, the didactic aim became commingled with the religious and philosophical treatment of ideas. Finally, certain literary conventions had taken shape which regulated the pattern of literary productions. This feature was particularly noticeable in the treatment of Love or Aham in the early Tamil classics. A truly historical or objective approach was vitiated by these literary conventions.

## *II. Quasi-historical Literature*

However, in the whole range of Tamil literature, there have appeared certain quasi-historical compositions, which, if carefully utilised, can be made to yield some historical data. Often they supplement or confirm the information gathered from certain other sources. Besides the Śaṅgam works which provide indirect information on the political and social history, the most prominent among the types of semi-historical works are the Ulā, Kōvai, Paraṇi, Kalambakam, Ammānai, Śatakam and Pillaittami. Several of the outstanding works under these categories were produced during the 12th and 13th centuries and are of value for the history of the Imperial Chōlas.

These different patterns of semi-historical works vary in their historical value; and the particular compositions in each category, too, vary from one another in their utility for the historian. Thus the Ulā is a poem sung in praise of a king or a deity. Where its subject matter is a king, some historical data may be gathered from it. But occasionally it is difficult to discern the subject of the poem; for instance, it is not known whether the Ékāmbaranātha Ulā was composed in honour of the deity of Kāñchi or a Śambuvarāya chieftain whose name was Ékāmbaranātha. Doubtless, the most celebrated of the Ulās are those of Ottakkūttan on the three successive Chōla monarchs, namely, Vikrama Chōla (1118-35 A.D.), Kulōttunga II (1130-1150 A.D.) and Rāja Rāja II (1146-73 A.D.). He was the poet laureate of the Chōla court during the reigns of all these three monarchs. From the standpoint of history, no doubt, the shortcomings of court poetry are there, and the truth has to be sifted from the laudatory verses.

The Ulā assumes a conventional literary form, and it describes the supposed procession (paraṇi) of its hero, the

king, who is imagined as going around the city on a stroll along with his officers, apparently in order to ascertain the condition of his subjects living in the city. In the course of this description the poet provides a glorious and often an exaggerated account of the achievements of the king and his predecessors.

It is, however, notable that certain facts mentioned by the Ulās are confirmed by the epigraphic and other sources. For instance, the Vikrama Chōlan Ulā states that Rājamahēndra, the son of Rājēndra I, provided a serpent-couch set with precious stones for Lord Raṅganātha of Śrirāngam. It is notable that, though the 'Kōiloługu' of a later period does not mention this specific endowment, it refers to several improvements effected by Rājamahēndra in the temple of Raṅganātha. Again, the names of the feudatory chieftains and officers of Vikrama Chōla, mentioned in the Vikrama Chōlan Ulā, are confirmed by the inscriptions of his time. It may be observed in passing that the information regarding generals like Naralōka Vīra and Karuṇākara Tonḍaimān is gathered only from the Vikrama Chōlan Ulā and Kaliṅgattupparaṇi. Further the surname of 'Tyāgasamudra' assumed by Vikrama Chōla is mentioned both in the Vikrama Chōlan Ulā and in the inscriptions.

The Kulōttunga Chōlan Ulā also describes the renovation of the Chidambaram temple, and describes how gōpurams with seven tiers were erected, a shrine of the goddess was constructed and how several parts of the temple were thatched with golden sheets. It is significant that the improvements effected by this king, Kulōttunga II, in the temple and city of Chidambaram are mentioned in an inscription of the 7th year Kulōttunga's reign, found at Śripurambiyam.<sup>68</sup>

The 'Kōvai' represents a collection of poems dealing with normal conditions in times of peace. The main theme of a Kōvai centres round the conventional description of the course of love between lovers commencing from the moment of their accidental meeting. There are some works of this category which are purely religious, as for instance, the 'Tirukkōvai'. Among the semi-historical Kōvais, perhaps the earliest and the most notable one is the 'Pāndikkōvai'. But it is not available in full; some portions of it are cited in the later Commentaries and Anthologies. The histoical value of this work labours under another defect, namely, that though it mentions several battles fought by the successors of Kadungōn (590-620 A.D.), the central hero of the Kōvai was not a single king of the time, but an imginary hero to whom the achievements of the Pāṇḍya line are ascribed. Except, therefore, for securing confirmation of the references to battles found mentioned in the epigraphs, the 'Pāndikkōvai' is not of help to the student of history.

The 'Kulōttuṅgan Kōvai', whose author remains unknown, deals with Kumāra Kulōttuṅga, presumably Kulōttuṅga III; but its historical value is not considerable, though it throws some light on his participation in the Pāṇḍyan war of succession in the latter half of the 12th century.

The 'Tañjai Vāṇan Kōvai', of Poyyāmoḷi Pulavar, describes incidentally the exploits of Vāṇan, a general, presumably of the Pāṇḍyan king, Māravarman Kulaśēkhara (1268-1308 A.D.). The general's role in the Malai Nādu (Chēra country) is an important theme which finds a place in the Kōvai, and that enables us to identify the Pāṇḍyan king whom he served. Regarding the expedition of Māravarman Kulaśēkhara itself, the poem provides useful information.

‘Parani’ is pre-eminently a war poem; it describes the march of soldiers, the actual military operations and the result of the battle. The most well-known of the Paranis from the historical standpoint is the ‘Kalingattupparani’ of Jayankondar. It describes vividly the Kalinga expedition undertaken by Kulottunga, the Chola king (1070–1120 A.D.) and speaks of the ravages and depredations caused by the Chola army under its leader, Karunakara Tondaiman, during its progress in the Kalinga country. The Kalingattupparani provides incidentally other valuable pieces of information on the Chola history of Kulottunga’s time and also on the genealogy of the Chola line of kings.<sup>69</sup>

In passing it may be observed that the Kalingattupparani provides the information that Kadiyalur Rudran Kannanar received from Karikala a munificent gift of over a million and a half gold pieces for his composition of the Pattinappalai.

There are several other Paranis in Tamil literature; but they are not of historical value. For instance, the Takkayagapparani of Ottakkuttar is composed on a mythological theme. Though it mentions Virarajendra’s friendship with Vikramaditya VI (1076–1127 A.D.), the Western Chalukya ruler, and refers to Kulottunga II’s new constructions in the temple at Chidambaram, on the whole, it cannot be considered to be of great historical value.

It may be mentioned here that Ottakkuttan is known to have composed another Parani on Vikrama Chola’s Kalinga war, apparently in imitation of Jayankondar’s work; but it is not now available.

The ‘Kalambakam’ is a quasi-historical poem which deals with a single theme. The best known composition of this category is the ‘Nandikkalambakam’ by an anonymous author. The poem is believed to contain several interpolations.

As it stands at present, it consists of eighty stanzas, and it describes the victories of the reign of Pallava Nandivarman III (844–66 A.D.). The poem mentions the principal towns of this Tellārreñinda Nandivarman's kingdom, particularly Mahābalipuram, Kāñchi and Mylapore.

The 'Ammānai' is an historical ballad written in popular language because it is intended for the masses. An important poem of this class is the 'Rāmappayyan Ammānai', which dwells upon the military exploits of Rāmappayyan, the general and minister of Tirumala Nāyak (1623–59 A. D.) of Madurai. The historical data contained in this Ammānai are confirmed by other sources of information concerning the reign of Tirumala Nāyak. Thus, the 'Rāmappayyan Ammānai', though revelling in fanciful imagery at various places, is not devoid of historical value. It records not merely a conquest of the 'Malayalam' country by the ruler of Madurai, but it specifically states that the 'Nāñchinād Rāja', the foremost among the Nāyak vassals, was appointed to guard the forts of the Pāñdyan capital. Further, it adds that the king of Nāñchinād co-operated with Tirumala Nāyak against the Sētupati of Rāmanāthapuram.

Similar to the 'Rāmappayyan Ammānai', both in style and subject matter, is the ballad known as the 'Iravikkuttipillai Pōr', or 'Iravikkuttipillai Pāttu', as it is alternatively known. This ballad describes how, in the battle of Kaniyākulam, Iravikkuttipillai, the courageous commander of the Vēṇād forces, was killed while valiantly fighting against the Nāyak invaders. The ballad does not at all state that the battle ended in a victory for the Vēṇād ruler; in all probability, on the death of the commander, the Vēṇād army dispersed without further fight, virtually conceding the victory for the enemy.<sup>70</sup>

Two other ballads of a similar nature are the ‘Dēśingarājankadai’ and the ‘Khan Sāhib Śāndai’. The former deals with the war of Rāja Jai Singh, the ruler of Jinji in the 17th century, while the latter describes the life and achievements of Muhammad Yusuf Khan of Madurai, who had joined the company of sepoys under Clive in 1752 and served the English during the siege of Tiruchirāppallī. Appointed commandant of the sepoy in 1755, he defeated Haidar Āli in 1757, and at the time of Lally’s siege of Madras, he played a valiant part in harassing the besiegers. Later, Yusuf Khan rebelled because he was made the servant of the Nawab of Arcot by the English. Eventually, in 1764, he was executed by the order of the Nawab. His courage and ability have been praised by Lawrence and Hill. This ballad is of considerable value in throwing light on the personalities and events in South India during a critical period of the English struggle in the South.

The ‘Śatakam’, another type of semi-historical composition of a local character, became popular in the 17th and 18th centuries. Padikkāśu Pulavar was the author of the ‘Toṇḍaimaṇḍala Śatakam’ which dwells on Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam and its early history. The author of the poem enjoyed the patronage of Raghunātha Sētupati (1678-1710 A.D.) and of a rich Muslim merchant, Periyatambi Marakkāyar. The ‘Chōla maṇḍala Śatakam’ of Ātmanātha Dēśikar was composed about 1720, and it dwells upon the glories of the Chōlas. But both of these Śatakams base their accounts on the then current traditions. There is little evidence of a critical approach to the sources. Nevertheless, they are of some use in providing certain details connected with the history of these regions.

The ‘Pillaittamil’ which describes the hero’s childhood is historically the least useful among the semi-historical

works, for it is pre-eminently of biographical interest. A notable example of ‘Pillaiattamil’ is that composed by Ottakkūttan on Kulōttunga II. No doubt Ottakkūttan was a gifted poet, but this poem is not of any considerable value as a piece of historical literature.

Then there are certain chronicles which profess to provide local history with the temple of the region as its nucleus. Thus we have the ‘Maduraittalavaralāru’ which deals with the history of the Śrī Mīnakshi temple at Madurai. But, while it treats the later history of the institution fully, it is rather meagre in respect of the earlier period. Moreover, the dominance of the legendary lore obscures very often the historical utility of the account.

Belonging to the same category is the ‘Kōiloługu’ which provides the history of the Śrī Raṅganātha Temple at Śrīraṅgam. From all points of view this is a more satisfactory treatment of the subject than the ‘Maduraittalavaralāru’, although here, too, legends vitiate the reliability of the account at various places.

Ānanda Raṅgan Pillai’s Diary is a unique record, which though not a high class piece of literature, is of considerable historical value in respect of a short period of South Indian history. Ānanda Raṅgan Pillai was the ‘Dubāsh’ or interpreter and commercial agent of Dupleix. His Diary provides a full and vivid account of contemporary events from 1736 to 1760. The diary was continued for ten years more by Tiruveṅgadām Pillai, the nephew of Ānanda Raṅgan Pillai. This is also of some use, though it is less vivid and incisive than that recorded by his uncle.

Ānanda Raṅgan Pillai has provided a sound and a fairly impartial assessment of Dupleix and his activities. He shows how Dupleix had a remarkable skill in carrying out his plans.

Though occasionally Ānanda Raṅgan Pillai's personal pre-dilections have influenced his account, on the whole, it contains the record of an acute observer of contemporary events. It throws abundant light on the Anglo French conflict in South India during a critical epoch of Indian history and on the social and economic conditions of the region. In addition, the Diary gives us some idea of the state of colloquial Tamil current in Pondicherry during that time.

### *III. Classical Literary works—their direct and indirect value for the historian.*

The early Tamil classics known as the Śaṅgam works are remarkably helpful in the reconstruction of history. The penpictures provided by them are realistic for the most part, and therefore, though they do not constitute systematic history, they provide useful information on the political, social, economic and religious conditions of the age. No doubt, there are the shortcomings of court poetry in many cases, and these vitiate the data regarding the assessment of the political activities of kings. However, this limitation should not be exaggerated, for, generally the Śaṅgam poets, unlike those of later ages, were conspicuous for their forthrightness and plain speaking. In respect of their indirect and casual references to social phenomena, their evidence is remarkably unimpeachable. Moreover, the Śaṅgam literature was not so prominently dominated by religion, like the Tamil literature subsequent to the 7th century A.D.

In respect of political history, the Puram works, namely those classics which deal with objective phenomena, particularly with war, are of considerable historical value. Of these, it is well known that the Puranānūru and Padigruppattu throw abundant light on the kingdoms and feudatories of the Śaṅgam age, their wars and other activities. It is clear that the political power was largely in the hands of three potentates, the Chēra,

Chōla and Pāṇḍya monarchs who ruled over their traditional dominions, although on account of the varying fortunes of war, their boundaries were subjected to frequent changes. By the side of the three monarchs there were several chieftains who ruled over small principalities and others who were the feudatories of one or the other of the 'Mūvēndar', the three kings. The exact number of these chieftains and feudatories is not ascertainable. In connection with the famous battle of Talayālāṅkānam, at which the Pāṇḍyan king, Nedūñcheliyan secured a brilliant triumph over his adversaries, only the two other monarchs and five chieftains are mentioned. But in other contexts we hear of seven chieftains who became renowned for their liberality.

Among the three monarchies, we have a remarkably elaborate account of the Chēra kings from the extant poems of the Padirruppattu. Udiyañchēral, the first Chēra monarch,<sup>71</sup> is known to have been succeeded by his son, Nedūñchēral Ādan, who was a valiant hero. Surnamed as Imayavaramban, he is stated to have conquered the whole of India and carved the Chēra emblem on the Himalayas. The appellation, 'Imayavaramban' denoted that the northern boundary of his dominion extended up to the Himalayas. This is doubtless an instance of poetic exaggeration, but it may not be too much to infer that this Chēra king was an intrepid fighter who had vanquished several of his neighbours.

The Padirruppattu poems narrate the exploits of five kings belonging to the Udiyan Chēral line. Three others of a collateral branch also are mentioned. It is not, however, easy to determine whether these three were successors or co-kings of the Udiyañchēral line.<sup>72</sup> Nor has the controversy regarding the identity of the Chēra capital been resolved. Evidence in support of Tiruvañchaikkalam as well as of Karuvūr Vañchi is found in Tamil literature. Perhaps it is

not a fantastic surmise to think that the Chēras had two capitals, Tiruvañchaikkalam near the Western coast as well as Karuvūr Vañchi in the interior, identifiable with the modern Karuvūr. Two early Chēra inscriptions and Roman coins are found in Karuvūr. As I. Mahadevan thinks the Irumporais, a branch of the Chēra dynasty, ruled from Karuvūr.

A significant fact concerning Chēra history is that Parañar, the author of the Decad on the celebrated Chēran Šeñkuṭṭuvan has also contributed a poem (No. 369) in the Puranānūru anthology on the same monarch. This indicates the historicity of this king on the one hand and his contemporaneity with Parañar on the other. The Epilogue to the Vth Decad of the Padigṛuppattu provides the additional information that Chēran Šeñkuṭṭuvan established a temple in honour of Kañṇagi, the paragon of chastity. It is stated that Chēran Šeñkuṭṭuvan procured a stone for making the image of Kañṇagi after a fight with a chieftain of North India and that he had the stone bathed ceremoniously in the Ganges before it was brought to the Chēra country. These events are described at greater length in a truly epic style in the Šilappadikāram. Divergent views have been held as to which of these—the Epilogue to the Vth Decad of the Padigṛuppattu or the Epic, Šilappadikāram—which forms the original source of the association of Chēran Šeñkuṭṭuvan with Kañṇagi.

The Epilogues of the Padigṛuppattu are valuable for the reconstruction of Chēra history. But there is little doubt that they were composed considerably later than the poems themselves, firstly because the simple style of their language is markedly different from that of the poems, and secondly, because there are discrepancies between the Vth Decad of the Padigṛuppattu and its Epilogue. The Epilogue speaks of the stone brought from the north for erecting a temple for Kañṇagi,

while this is not mentioned in the text. To explain away the discrepancy as has been done by stating that the Padigam, unlike the poem, was composed after the king had returned from the north with the stone, is far-fetched. It is probable either that the Padigam incorporated certain ideas from the *Silappadikāram* or vice versa. However, though the late date of the Padigam and the consequent need for using it with caution are obvious, there is no justification for discarding the entire body of Padigams or Epilogues as valueless for the student of history.

As for the historical value of the *Purānānūru*, it has to be noticed that at the end of most of the poems contained in it, we find colophons indicating the names of the poets, the *Tīṇai*, *Turai* and the occasions for the composition of the poems. The colophons were apparently provided by the compiler of the anthology. But information as to who the compiler was, when the compilation was done and under whose patronage it was carried out, is lacking. Naturally, therefore, the reliability of the colophons is open to doubt. Perhaps they were based partly upon tradition and partly upon certain well-authenticated facts. Several scholars have attempted to provide a connected account of the various dynasties of the *Śaṅgam* age based on these colophons and have furnished different genealogies, one at variance with the other. Some have given up the attempt, despairing of their reliability.<sup>73</sup> But in this connection it is important to remember that the *Kalittogai* is stated to have been compiled by the poet, *Nallanduvanār*, who was himself the author of some poems in the same collection. In the case of *Aiṅkuṟu-nūru*, the compiler was one whose poems are found in certain *Śaṅgam* classics themselves.<sup>74</sup> Therefore, all the colophons are not of a much later date and they cannot be dismissed as untrustworthy, though it must be admitted that they do

not help us in weaving a continuous account of the political history of the Śaṅgam age. It may be added that Nachchinār-kiniyar, the celebrated commentator, does not challenge the authenticity of the colophons.

It is idle to contend that the kings and events mentioned in the Puranānūru are figments of imagination. There are references to the Chōla and Pāṇḍya kings mentioned in the Puranānūru in the Copper Plates of later times. For instance, the Chōla kings like Perunaṛkiṭṭi, Karikālan and Cheṅganān are referred to in the stone inscriptions and Copper Plates of 11th century A.D. Again, the Pāṇḍyan king, Palyāgasālai Mudukudumi Peruvaludi, about whom several poems are found in the Puranānūru collection, is mentioned in the Vēlvikkudi Plates of the 8th century A.D. The famous Talayālaṅkānam battle, described in the Puranānūru (Nos. 19 and 23) is mentioned in the Sinnamanūr Plates of the 10th century A.D. Unless it is fantastically imagined that these epigraphic references are all based on the literary works, the authenticity of the kings and the events associated with them is unquestionable.

More valuable, however, are the Śaṅgam classics for the historian of the social, economic, religious and cultural conditions of the early times. It need hardly be added that it is now increasingly realised that history is not concerned only with kings and queens, wars and treaties but with the condition and progress of the people at large. In respect of social position, the Śaṅgam works do not make a deliberate attempt at overrating the customs and manners, the institutions and the life of the people. They were the days when there was no conscious effort at glorifying one's own culture. Therefore, the penpictures and casual references provided by the poets of the Śaṅgam age are refreshingly realistic.

The diet, dress, occupations, the institution of caste, marriage, pre-marital love, the status of women in society, the state of education and learning as well as the manner of disposal of the dead are among the many features of social life learnt from the references in the Śaṅgam literature. The Tolkāppiyam, one of the earliest works, deals with many questions of social organisation in the section on Poruḷadhi-kāram. The Aiṅkurunūru, Narrinai, Ahanānūru and Kalit-togai, and more particularly the Pattuppāṭṭu (Ten Idylls) provide a remarkable wealth of information.

The casual and indirect nature of the date furnished has the supreme merit that it was not dressed for the stage and that it was not deliberately exaggerated or underrated. However, it has a serious drawback, too. The details furnished are not always as full and comprehensive, as one may wish. For instance, it would be interesting to know the extent to which the caste system had taken root in the Tamil country during the age of Śaṅgam. Again, it is not known whether Sati was then common among all classes of people, though we hear of a few cases of Sati from the literature of the time. In fact, one serious handicap in the use of literature for re-constructing social history is that, often, deductions have to be made from a few known examples. The limitations to the validity of such generalisations have to be remembered, though they should not be exaggerated.

At times conflicting deductions are possible from the inadequate and stray references, and great care has to be exercised in drawing conclusions from them. For instance, it is not easy to provide an answer to the question whether all brāhmaṇins of the Śaṅgam age were pure vegetarians or not. Kapilar, the author of Kuṛiñchippāṭṭu and several poems in the Ahanānūru, Puranānūru, Kuruntogai and Narrinai, describes himself a brāhmaṇin, but speaks of the charm of meat

and drink, as if from personal experience. On the other hand, we have a description of the typical brahmin diet which was purely vegetarian, found in the *Perumbāñārruppādai*.<sup>76</sup> The attempt made by some modern writers to explain away Kapilar's reference as not applicable to himself, but to the inhabitants of the Parambu land of Pāri, seems to be laboured and unconvincing.

Regarding the religious beliefs and practices we have several references in the *Eṭṭuttogai* and *Pattuppāṭṭu*. The worship of Muruga and Korravai, Indra and Varuṇa is adverted to in several poems. The advent of Āryan ideas and rituals is particularly found in the *Paripāḍal* and *Tirumurugārruppādai*.

It is in respect of the fine arts, particularly of music and drama, that the data furnished by the classics, are strikingly abundant. References to the arts of music and dance practised by the Pāṇar, Viṭaliyar and Porunar are found in most of the Śaṅgam works. Literary commentators of later times speak of several works on music having existed prior to the third Śaṅgam. It is unreasonable to imagine that they are all inventions of the myth makers.

Music and dance attained a remarkably high standard of excellence in the days of Śilappadikāram. The *Araṅgēṛrukādai* of this Epic is almost an encyclopaedia of these fine arts of the age. It reveals in particular how the professional dancers and courtesans were systematically trained in the fine arts. The custom was to provide the young girls of the class sound training for a period of seven years beginning from the 5th year. The training was provided by a dancing master, a music master, a composer of songs and those who played on the accompanying musical instruments like the flute, yāl, drum and so forth. In fact, the references to musical instruments

in the *Silappadikāram*, as well as in the earlier literary works are remarkably numerous. There were instruments made of leather, bamboo, wood and of strings derived from the veins of animals. The 'Yāl' was a stringed instrument of great popularity among the early Tamils. We do not hear of the Yāl subsequent to the 11th century A.D.

The *Araṅgērrukādai* shows that the different kinds of body movement and limb movement, the poses, gestures, conformity to the time beats, the manipulation of the vocal chords and all other allied elements of the art were taught systematically. The pose of the hand, in particular, received very careful attention. The *Silappadikāram* speaks of thirty-three patterns of the hand pose. However, this development must have been the product of a gradual process, for the *Kalittogai*, one of the later *Saṅgam* classics also describes the attention devoted to the pose of the hand and to the facial expressions during the dance.

#### *IV. Chronological Background*

This raises the crucial question of the chronology of the early literary works in Tamil, which is by no means a settled affair even at the present day. But it may be observed that broadly the date of the *Eṭṭuttogai* and *Pattuppāṭṭu* is determined to have ranged from the 1st to the 3rd century A.D., the period which may be described as the *Saṅgam* age. Besides the *Gajabāhu-Śeṅguṭṭuvan* synchronism, the so-called sheet anchor of early Tamilian chronology, which ascribes the events embodied in the *Silappadikāram* to the 2nd century A.D., the remarkable coincidence of the Tamil literary references with the data furnished by the Greek geographers of the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D., reinforced by the discovery of the Roman coins of that epoch in South India, particularly in *Arikāmēdu*, lends support to this view.

If it is taken that the Śaṅgam age is assignable to the first three centuries of the Christian Era, what can be said regarding the dates of the different works of the Śaṅgam? A study of the Eṭṭuttogai poems indicates that the verses in the Puranānūru belong to different periods of time in the Śaṅgam age. Of the others, the Kalittogai and Paripāḍal seem to have been later than the Ahanānūru and other Śaṅgam works. The Pattuppāṭṭu are generally later than the Eṭṭuttogai, while the Tirumurugārruppaḍai is the latest of them all. This conclusion is based upon the increased evidence of Āryan mythology and the occurrence of Sanskrit words, besides the differences noticeable in the social life depicted in them.

Then comes the question whether the Tolkāppiyam, the earliest extant Tamil grammar, preceded or succeeded the Śaṅgam classics. Some have assigned to it a date subsequent to the 4th century A.D., but, every thing considered, it appears to have preceded the Śaṅgam works. The deities mentioned in the Tolkāppiyam are Varuṇa, Vēndan, Māyōn (Vishṇu) and Sēyōn (Muruga). On the other hand, besides Muruga and Kaṇṭhan (Vishṇu) Śiva and Baladēva also find a place in the Eṭṭuttogai and Pattuppāṭṭu. Perhaps they are later introductions. Further, the Tolkāppiyam states that the matter on Ahapporūl should be composed in Paripāḍal and Kalippa. But, contrary to this prescription, the Śaṅgam poets have composed most of the Aham verses of Ahapporūl in Ahaval metre. Moreover, for certain rules enunciated in the Tolkāppiyam, examples cannot be found in the extant Śaṅgam poems. These indicate that the Eṭṭuttogai and Pattuppāṭṭu appeared only subsequent to the Tolkāppiyam. The traditional view, first stated by Iraiynār Ahapporuḷurai, that Tolkāppiyam belonged to the Second Śaṅgam may not be baseless.

That brings us to another controversial issue, namely, the number of Śaṅgams. The Iraiynār Ahapporuūurai and later commentaries have spoken of three Śaṅgams, but most of the modern scholars have cast this aside as a piece of incredible legend. However, the references to the encroachment of land by sea in early Tamil literature and to the shifting of the Pāṇḍyan capitals suggest that at first the Pāṇḍyans had Ten Madurai as the capital, then Kapāḍapuram and last Vada Madurai, the present Madurai. Poets might well have been associated with these respective capitals and the tradition regarding the works alleged to have been lost might have been based on reality. Numerous literary classics are said to have been lost, and although the fabulous legends connected with the Śaṅgams are not true, certain fundamental facts like the existence of earlier Pāṇḍyan capital and the literary activities associated with them cannot be dismissed as baseless.

While Tolkāppiyam seems to have belonged to the Second Śaṅgam the common view held by Tamil scholars that the Padinenkīlkaṇakku poems and the twin Epics, Maṇimēkalai and Śilappadikāram also belong to the Śaṅgam age are not acceptable. The Kuṛaṭ, no doubt, stands on a different footing. The parallelisms of ideas contained in the Narrinai, 32 and 355 Kuṛuntogai, 230, Ahanānūru, 184, and Kuṛiñchippatti 206-7 to certain corresponding couplets of the Tirukkuṛaṭ show that the latter had appeared earlier. Above all, verse 34 of the Puranānūru anthology which states: ‘Cheydi Konṛōrkku Uydi Illena Arām Pāqirrē Āyilai Kaṇava’ clinches the issue and indicates its earlier date.

But the other Padinenkīlkaṇakku works mostly belong to the 5th or 6th century A.D. The reference to Peru Muttaraiyar mentioned in inscriptions of the 9th century A.D. and the occurrence of their name in Nālaḍi suggests a late date for

the latter. Though inscriptional evidence need not be the only basis, the attempt to explain it away by stating that the argument of silence in epigraphy cannot be trumped up for suggesting a late date is not convincing. At any rate, the Muttaraiyar could not have lived in the Śāṅgam age; probably they belonged to a century or two prior to the reference found in epigraphy. Further, the language of the Nālaḍi, Innā Nāṛpadu and Iniyavai Nāṛpadu, for example, confirm the fact that they were later than the age of the Śāṅgam.<sup>76</sup>

Regarding the date of the Epics, again, divergent views persist. Scholars who swear by the old tradition consider them as Śāṅgam works, basing their position on the Padigams in the Epics and on the Chēran Śēṅguṭuvan synchronism. But while Chēran Śēṅguṭuvan is assignable to the 2nd century A.D., the alleged authorship of the Śilappadikāram to Ilāṅgō, the king's brother, seems to be an invention. The difference in style, and more important, the different social conditions like the Āryan pattern of marriage and the higher stage of fine-arts reflected in the Śilappadikāram suggest a date later than 3rd century A.D. but anterior to that of the Dēvāram hymnists of 7th century A.D.<sup>77</sup> The view that they belong to the 5th or 6th century A.D. does not seem fantastic.

#### *V. The Religious Works*

Gradually the literary source became surcharged with the religious motivation. The themes dealt with are almost exclusively religious, and therefore, the mythical and legendary element predominates in them. To that extent the value of literature as a source of history diminishes. This is true of the age of the Bhakti movement in Tamilaham which was at its height from the 7th to the 9th century A.D. Religious tolerance and goodwill prevailed among the Tamils only till about the 6th century A.D.

The Śaiva Nāyanmārs and the Vaishṇava Ālvārs traversed throughout the country visiting temples and pouring forth their devotional songs. This fervour was primarily provoked by the Hindu hostility towards the Jains and Buddhists. Though not directly valuable to the student of history these outpourings of the saints and devotees are of use in understanding the religious, social and cultural conditions of the people.

The hymns of the Nāyanmārs and Ālvārs were collected and arranged in canonical form in the 10th and early 11th centuries. The works of the Śaiva hymnist and of the religious writers were collected in the shape of twelve Tirumūrais. Begun by Nambi Āndār Nambi of the 10th century A.D., the first seven books formed the Dēvāram, which contain the hymns of the great Nāyanmārs. Book VIII contains the Tiruvāchakam of Māṇikkavāchakar, while books IX and XI contain the hymns of several minor saints. Book X consists of 3,000 verses of Tirumūlar known as ‘Tirumandiram’ which is an obscure manual of Śaivism. The Tiruttōḍar Purāṇam, commonly known as the Periya Purāṇam is the last and twelfth book of the Tirumūrais and, used with care and discernment, they help the reconstruction of the history of early Śaivism and the beliefs current in that age.

On the Vaiṣṇava side, the Vaiṣṇava canon, Nālāyira Prabhandham including hymns of the Ālvārs, was arranged by Nāthamuni.

The Periya Purāṇam narrates in an admirable manner the lives of the sixtythree Śaiva Nāyanmārs. No doubt, many incredible legends find a place in it, but the author, a Chōla administrator, who had access to official documents, has portrayed the social and religious conditions of his age as the background of his main theme. For example,

Śekkilār's description of the brahmin village of Ādanūr and the slums of the pariahs living in the outskirts of Ādanūr may be taken as representative of the conditions of about the 12th century A.D.

Some facts of political history are also recorded incidentally. It states that Pugal Chōla Nāyanār was a Chōla ruler, presumably of the 7th century A.D., who conquered Uraiyyūr. It reveals also that the Pāṇḍyan ruler during the time of Tirujñāna Sambandar had married a Chōla princess known as Maṅgayarkkaraśi. It is learnt that when Sundaramūrti and Chēramānperumāl visited Madurai they found that a Chōla prince had married a Pāṇḍyan princess. Thus the matrimonial relationship between the Chōla and Pāṇḍyan royal lines seem to have been common in the 7th and 8th centuries.

The stories of persecution described by Śekkilār are partly based on legends and partly on the general tendencies of the times. Some have thought that the accounts of religious persecution described by Śekkilār were reflections of his age and not of the epoch of Dēvāram. But this seems to be the result of misreading the conditions during the epoch of the Bhakti movement. In reality the religious hostility must have commenced earlier. However, it may be added that from the 12th century onwards the Periya Purāṇam has influenced the life and thought of the Śaivas in no small measure.

The Nālāyira Prabandham, which describes the life and activities of the Vaiṣṇava saints, assumed a proper form about the 11th century A.D. Though the chronology adopted by it is fantastic, it traces the development of Vaiṣṇavism in the Tamil country in the proper historical sequence. In passing, it may be observed that Tirumaṅgai Ālvār's works

afford some historical data of value. The commentaries on the hymns of the Ālvārs were written later, probably in the 15th and 16th centuries, and they throw some light on the political and social conditions, though the material has to be sifted carefully from the accounts provided.

The Tiruviļaiyādal Purāṇam of Perumbārappuliyūr Nambi, probably of the 13th century, deals with the legends connected with the 64 sports of Śiva. It mentions incidentally some details regarding the Pāṇḍyan rulers, but the whole account is so surcharged with mythology that it is impossible to sift historical facts from the legends. Subsequently Parañjōti dwelt on the same theme. His list of the Pāṇḍyan kings is different from that given in the Tiruviļaiyādal Purāṇam; but that, too, is unreliable.

The Śaiva Siddhānta school of thought and literature connected with it commenced about the 12th century A.D. Early in the 13th century there appeared the celebrated manual of Śaivism of Meykaṇḍār in his Śiva Jñāna Bōdham. On the basis of his brilliant work there grew up an extensive philosophical literature which has influenced the thought of the intellectuals among the Śaivites through the succeeding centuries. The system stresses the importance of sincere devotion. It discards caste and ritual, and on the whole, the Śaiva Siddhānta system is of importance in the social history of the Tamils.

The period extending roughly from the 12th century to 14th century A.D. is the epoch of the famous Commentaries on the literary works. Nakkīrar's Commentary on Iraiyanār Ahapporuļ was perhaps the earliest of the series, but its exact date is not determinable. The commentators of Tol-kāppiyam, like Ilampūraṇar, Sēnāvaraiyar and Nachchinārkiniyar and the commentators of Śilappadikāram like

Arumpada Uraiyāśiriyar and Adiyārkkunallār and above all, the celebrated Parimēlalāgar, the commentator of Tirukkural and Paripāṭal, are all learned writers. Though they adopted the traditional pattern of commenting on early works, they throw abundant light on the social, religious, literary and cultural institutions of the Tamils; however, they cannot be considered as systematic works on social history. Among these commentaries, those of Adiyārkkunallār and Nachchiniarkiniyar seem to be of the greatest value for the student of the social and cultural institutions of the early Tamils.

From the 16th century onward there appeared numerous Sthalapurāṇas, many of which were translations from Sanskrit Sthalamāhātmyas. The 18th century was par excellence the age of Sthalapurāṇas. However, they are anything but history, though they are of use for local history of modern times.

#### *VI. The Modern Epoch*

Prose writing in Tamil assumed an importance during the age of the Commentaries, and it increased in popularity in the 18th century. In the 19th century and the recent times, fiction in the shape of novels and short stories has appeared, and in some measure, it reflects the social conditions, habits and customs of people. Very recently some effort at writing history in Tamil has received encouragement, and it is likely to have a bright future, provided objectivity does not yield to sentimental chauvinism.

There is one source of importance which remains to be fully exploited. This is the vast body of manuscript material found in public bodies like Maṭhas and Churches as well as in the hands of private individuals. They pertain to a variety of subjects. Some are literary compositions, some are medical manuals, while a few throw light on political, social and economic

conditions. Often the owners of these manuscripts are unwilling to make researchers use them. The Government must come to their rescue.

Col. Mackenzie, who was the Surveyor General of the East India Company in the early 19th century, took a great interest in the collection of manuscripts in the different languages of South India. It was at his instance that the ‘Karnāṭaka Savistāra Charitam’ and ‘Kōṇgu Dēśa Rājākkal’ were written, but their historical value is not much, since many of the manuscripts on which the accounts were based are surcharged with legends. But doubtless, some historical facts can be gleaned from them.

There are, on the other hand, certain records like the ‘Mudaliyār Manuscripts’ gathered from the Periyavīṭṭu Mudaliyār’s house at Alagiyapāṇḍipuram (Kanyākumari Dist.) which yield very useful data in respect of political, administrative, social and economic history of Nāñchinād. More or less similar manuscripts available in various places of Tamil Nādu are of value, and have to be exploited with thoroughness and discrimination.

## N O T E S

1. See Dr. S. K. Aiyangar : *Beginnings of South Indian History* (1918) pp. 249-56 for an account of the legend and P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar : *History of the Tamils* (1929), pp. 226-30 for a critical examination of the legend.
2. Madras Epigraphist's Report for 1908, pp. 50 ff. That there flourished a Śaṅgam is evident from the statement alleged to have been made by Nedunjeļian, the victor of the battle of Talayalaṅgānam, that if he were to be defeated, the extent of his kingdom should not be sung by poets of world-wide renown, the chief of whom was Māṅguḍi Marudan of great eminence (*Puram*, 72).
3. *Mahābhārata*, Par IX. 36, See also E. H. Warmington : *The Commerce between the Roman Empire and India*, (1928) p. 167.
4. See V. R. R. Dikshitar : *Studies in Tamil Literature and History*, (1936) pp. 20-21 and K. G. Sesha Aiyar : *Cēra kings of the Śaṅgam period* (1937) pp. 97-122 for an enumeration of the different theories.
5. *Tiruttēvar Tēvāram*, II, 10 and *Tirupputtūr Tiruttagam*, II, 1.2.
6. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri : *A History of South India*, (1955) pp. 112-13. While it is likely that the term Śaṅgam was derived from the Jains or Buddhists, P. T. S. Iyengar's suggestion that the Tamil Śaṅgam was established on the model of Vajra Nandi's Jain Saṅgha of A. D. 470 at Madurai, seems to be little more than a piece of guess work. (Op. cit. p. 247).
7. Dr. N. P. Chakravarti : Presidential address to the 17th session of the Indian History Congress, December, 1954.
8. K. K. Pillay : "The South Indian Brāhmaṇi Inscriptions and the Śaṅgam Age." *Tamil Culture*, April, 1956.
9. See V. R. R. Dikshitar : op. cit. pp. 24-45 for a brief account of the extant works of the Śaṅgam literature.

10. Among the *Eṭṭutogai* anthologies, *Purānānūru*, and *Padiṭṭuppatti* deal with Puram, and *Nāṭṭiṇai*, *Kuṛuntogai*, *Aīṅgurunūru*, *Kalittogai* and *Ahanānūru* with Aham: and while *Paripāḍal* partakes of the characteristics of both. Among the Ten Idylls, *Porunarāṭṭuppadaī*, *Śirupāṇāṭṭuppadaī*, *Perumbāṇāṭṭuppadaī*, *Tirumurugaṭṭuppadaī*, and *Malaipāḍukadām* are laudatory poems on patrons, and *Mullaippāṭṭu*, *Nedunalvāḍai*, *Kuriṇjippāṭṭu* and *Paṭṭinappālai* are love poems, while *Maduraikkañchi* is a benedictory poem.
11. Contra. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, op. cit. p. 350. The reference to the author of *Kural* as the true poet (Poyyil pulavan) in *Maṇimēkalai* (Canto 22. 11.60-1) suggests an established reputation and an early date for him. Besides, the extant *Tiruvalḷuvamālai*, an anthology of panegyrical verses sung by Saṅgam poets, proves the early appreciation of his splendid work.
12. *Indra Viṭṭā* (festival) is hardly mentioned in the Saṅgam classics. A faint reference to the temple of Indra occurs in *Puram* (241). On the other hand, by the age of the Epics the Indra festival had become so important that Puhār is stated to have been destroyed by Heavenly wrath caused by the failure to celebrate it regularly.
13. M. Rajarao : 'The chronology of events in the *Silappadikāram*' *The Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society—Culture and Heritage Number*, 1956.
14. See S. Kuppuswami Sastri : *Journal of Oriental Research*, Madras, Vol. I, pp. 191 ff. Contra Dr. S. Krishnaswamy Aiyangar : *Maṇimēkalai in its Historical Setting*, (1928) pp. xxiv ff. Dr. Aiyangar thinks that the views of Dinnāga must have been independently anticipated by the author of *Maṇimēkalai* which might have been composed a century earlier than Dinnāga, whose date, it may be added, is still a matter of speculation.
15. Paraṇar, a Saṅgam poet has sung on Chēran Seṅguṭuvan who figures also in *Silappadikāram*. Either Seṅguṭuvan of Paraṇar was a different king, or more probably Paraṇar was a contemporary poet of Seṅguṭuvan, while the author of the *Silappadikāram* was of a later period.

16. Madras Epigraphist's Report, 1907, p. 52 and K. A. N. Sastri : *Studies in Cōla History and Administration*, pp. 14-18.
17. As examples of poets who boldly remonstrated against ill-treatment may be mentioned *Perundalai Śāttanār* (*Puṭam* 151, 165, 205) ; *Peruncittiranār* (*Puṭam* 207 and 206) and *Auvaiyār* (*Puṭam* 206).
18. *Maduraikkāñci*, 1. 61. He has been identified with Vaḍimbalaṁba Ninravan by the annotator, Naccinārkiniyar.
19. *Ibid.* 1. 759.
20. *Puṭanānūru*, briefly called *Puṭam*, verses 18, 19, 23-6, 76-9, 371-2.
21. *Ahanānūru*, briefly called *Aham*, verses 36, 116, 175, 253, 266 and 238.
22. *Kuruntogai*, 393.
23. *Nattinai*, 358 and 387.
24. *Puṭam*, 21 and 367 ; *Aham*, 26 and *Nattinai*, 98.
25. *Puṭam*, 71, 246, 247 and *Aham*, 26.
26. V. Kanakasabhai Pillai : *Tamils Eighteen hundred years ago*, (1904) p. 76. M. Raghava Iyengar : *Chēran Śenгуtuvan* (Tamil) 2nd edn., 106-7 n. See K. A. Nilakanta Sastri : *The Cōlas* (1955), p. 58. n. 60 for the criticism of the genealogies attempted so far.
27. *Puṭam* 65 ; *Aham* 55, 246.
28. *Aham* 125.
29. *Aham* 141, *Paṭṭinappālai*, 11. 228-82.
30. *Paṭṭinappālai*, 11. 283-4.
31. *Puṭam* 7, 224 ; *Porunarāṭṭuppaṭai* 11. 141-8. 187-8 ; *Maṇimēkalai*, Canto I. i. 39. *Śilappadikāram*, Canto V. 11. 90-104 : Canto VI, 11. 159-50.
32. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri : *Studies in Cōla History and Administration* (1932) pp. 19-38.

32. *Puṇam*, 74.
33. Incidentally it indicates that *Kaṭavāṭi* belongs to the Śaṅgam age.
34. K. G. Sesha Aiyar : ‘*Cēra kings of the Śaṅgam Period*,’ (1937) pp. 125-9.
35. Canto XXVIII 11. 114-22.
36. *Ibid*, Canto XXVI 11. 54-6.
37. See *Puṇam* 2 ; *Aham* 65 and 168.
38. K. A. N. Sastri seems to overestimate the value of *Purāṇānūṭu* when he says : ‘The data furnished by these poems for historical reconstructions will not be the less valuable on account of their being drawn from casual literary pieces rather than from chronicles or other works of a professedly historical nature.’ *Studies in Cōla History and Administration*, p. 1.
39. See V. R. R. Dikshitar : *Studies in Tamil Literature and History* (1936) pp. 229-54.
40. *Puṇam*, 35. *Padiṭṭuppattu*, 13.
41. *Puṇam*, 26.
42. *Kural*, see for example Nos, 448, 543, 545, 555, 564, 638 and 872.
43. As an example of such unwarranted generalisation see V. R. R. Dikshitar’s treatment of Indra’s festival. *Op. cit.* pp. 305-07.
44. *Puṇam*, 196; *Perumbāṇāṭṭuppāṭai*, 405 : *Paṭṭinappālai*, 11. 117-20.
45. *Puṇam*, 160, 390, 398 ; *Mullaippāttu*, 60 ; *Kuṛuntogai*, 167, 210.
46. *Puṇam*, 56, 150; *Malaipāḍukāḍām*, 11, 153, 155, 168, 175-8, etc. *Paṭṭinappālai*, 108.
47. *Silappadikāram*, Canto XXX, 1. 189.
48. *Puṇam*, 279.
49. *Kuṛiñjipāṭṭu*, 1. 139.

51. *Puram*, 257; *Perumbāṇṭuppādai*, 69; *Maduraikkāñci*, 63.
52. *Puram*, 62; *Śilappadikāram*, Canto XVI, 1. 55; *Manimēkalai*, Canto XXVIII, lines 240-3 Contra. K. A. N. Sastri : *A History of Southern India*, p. 130.
53. *Puram*, 230, 289, 368; *Nāṭṭinai*, 93; *Paṭṭinappālai*, 11. 5-23; *Porunārāṇṭuppādai*, 11. 245-6. P. T. S. Iyengar gives a diffuse description about the foreign trade in his ‘*History of the Tamils*’ Ch. XXVIII. The most systematic account is still that of Warmington: ‘The Commerce between the Roman Empire and India,’ pp. 274-5.
54. *Maduraikkāñci*, 11. 139-44; *Paṭṭinappālai*, 11. 59-117.
55. *Puram*, 183, *Tolkāppiyam*, *Poruḷadhikāram*, 20 and 632.
56. *Puram*, 34, 122, 166, 224.
57. *Śilappadikāram*, Canto V, 11, 24-58.
58. Ibid. Canto 1. 11. 45-58. See *Tolkāppiyam* ‘Kaṛpiyal’ sūṭra 4 and ‘Poruḷ’ Sūṭras 104-6 regarding the original two forms of marriage.
59. *Aham*, 7.
60. *Puram*, 246 and 247.
61. *Kuṭṭal*. see for example, Nos. 51, 55, 56.
62. *Puram*, 85, *Paṭṭinappālai*, 11. 23-6.
63. *S'īlappadikāram*, Cantos V and VI.
64. *Puram*, 33, mentions in particular the popular dance, *Alliyakkūṭṭi*.
65. Canto VI.
66. The dance which constituted the worship of *Koṭṭavai*, the goddess of victory, is vividly described in *Śilappadikāram*, Canto XII.
67. *Śilappadikāram*, Canto IX, 1. 10.
68. Annual Report of Epigraphy, 1927, II, 24. Some structures in the Chidambaram temple are attributed to Vikrama Chōla, 106. Apparently, both the kings devoted their attention to the improvement of this temple.

69. The Chōla genealogy provided by the ‘Vikraman Chōlan Ulā’ and the ‘Kalingattupparāṇi’ tally in fundamentals with that found in the Kanyākumari inscription of Virarāṇjendra.
70. Contra : T. K. Velu Pillay: The Travancore State Manual. Vol. II. pp. 191-2.
71. Udiyañ Chēral is stated to have fed the armies of the Mahābhārata battle at Kurukshētra. This is a clear instance of mythical fabrication. Some Pāṇḍya and Chōla kings are also given the same honour in other Saṅgam poems. However, the attempt made by some to distinguish Udiyañ Chēral from Peñuñchōggū Chēral is not convincing.
72. The deduction drawn by K. G. Sesha Aiyar in his ‘Cēra Kings of the Saṅgam Period,’ by Auvvai Durasami Pillai in his ‘Papḍai Nālaich Chēra Mannargal’ (Tamil) and by A. Chiḍambaranar in his ‘Chērar Varalāru’ (Tamil) are not free from doubts.
73. P. T. S. Iyengar : History of the Tamils, p. 417. He concludes that the colophons are an inextricable tangle of fact and fiction, of tradition and guess, and therefore, useless for the purpose of constructing genealogical lists of kings.” He adds, however, that notes on the life of a few kings can be recovered from these poems.
74. Pulātturai Muṛgiya Kūḍalūr Kīlār, the compiler of the Aiñkurunūru, was the author of poems 166, 167 and 214 of the Kuñuntogai and poem 229 of the Puñanānūru.
75. Perumbāñāguppaḍai : 306 ff.
76. The suggestion that the Muttaraiyar, who are described as opulent, were probably identical with the Kaṭabhras, who, defeating the Chēra, Chōla and Pāṇḍyan kings acquired their wealth and position might well be true. If so, the date of Nālaḍi and of several of the Kīlkaṇakku works may be sometime between 4th and 7th century A. D.
77. Indra and Indra Vilā are mentioned in the Saṅgam works, but they assumed a greater prominence in the Epics. References to ‘Indiran Chiṭappu’ ‘Indira Kōḍaṇai’ and ‘Indra Vil’ occur only in the Epics but neither in the Saṅgam works nor in the Dēvārams.
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## XI. Inscriptions of Tamil Nādu and their historical value

Epigraphy forms the most authentic source of the early and medieval histories of Tamil Nādu. The epigraphic wealth of Tamil Nādu is remarkable; it has been reckoned that Tamil Nādu has well over 40,000 inscriptions, numerically the largest in any State in the whole of India. But many thousands have yet to be copied and published. It is notable that Tamil inscriptions, partially or wholly in Tamil, are found in the neighbouring regions of Malayālam, Telugu and Kannada speaking areas and a few even in Šrī Laṅka and Malaysia with which Tamil kings had contacts in the past.

The earliest inscriptions are those called the ‘Tamil-Brāhmī’ inscriptions, generally found on the rock-cut beds of natural caverns or on mud pots. They are short, containing barely three or four lines. The total number of these Tamil - Brāhmī inscriptions so far discovered is about eighty. The number is likely to increase. Recently Dr. K. V. Raman has discovered an old Brāhmī inscription at Aritṭappatti near Madurai. Most of them were associated with Jain devotees. They have been found in villages such as Ānamalai, Alagarmalai, Mēttuppatti, Tiruvādavūr, Sittanvāśal and Kunṛakkudi in the present Madurai and Tirunelveli Districts. They have been reckoned to belong to the 2nd and 1st centuries B. C. It is said that a Tamil - Brāhmī inscription of about the 1st century B. C. refers to certain musical instruments. In all probability this is the earliest

epigraph in the Tamil country, pertaining to Music. It is interesting to find in some of these inscriptions certain names figuring in the Śaṅgam classics. For example, we find Kaṭalan Vaṭṭudi<sup>1</sup>, Neḍuñcheḷiyan and Kaḍunkō.<sup>2</sup> These names are probably those occurring in early Pāṇḍyan and Chēra history.

Similar to the Tamil - Brāhmī inscriptions we find the earlier Aśōkan Brāhmī inscriptions. Professors Haimendorf and Sankalia think that the Aśōkan edicts at Māski, Brahmagiri and Kapbāl, for instance, were addressed only to people who could read and write the Aśōkan - Brāhmī. Their language, however, as found in the Tamil country is Tamil. In fact, the difference between Aśōkan - Brāhmī and Tamil - Brāhmī inscriptions of the Tamil country is that certain peculiar Tamil letters appear in the latter. These distinctive letters are ṇa (ŋ), ḷa (ə̄), ṣa (ŋ) and na (ə̄).

It is notable that the Tamil - Brāhmī script was identical with what is known as the Drāviḍi script. Evidently the northerners employed this term. A Jaina manuscript, assignable to the 1st century B. C., calls it 'Dāmilī.' This Tamil - Brāhmī or 'Drāviḍi' or 'Dāmilī' script is the pattern found in Arikamēdu during the 1st and 2nd centuries A. D. It is from the Drāviḍi or Tamil - Brāhmī script that there emerged the *Vatteḷuttu* script about the 3rd century A.D.; it assumed its full form in the 5th century A.D. The *Vatteḷuttu* script continued to be in vogue in the Pāṇḍyan kingdom down to the 13th century A.D. and in rare cases even till the 18th century A.D.

The Tamil script proper also emerged from the Drāviḍi or Dāmilī script about the 5th century A.D., and developing very gradually, assumed its present form only in the 17th century A.D.

While considering the question of the evolution of the Tamil script and particularly the early Tamil-Brāhmī script it is not irrelevant to speak of its connection, if any, with the pictographic script of the Indus Valley civilisation, which continues to be a riddle. Recently, apart from the Finnish and Russian experts Irāvadam Mahādevan has devoted much attention to the study of the script of the early Tamil inscriptions. In his “Corpus of Tamil-Brāhmī Inscriptions” he examines the palaeography of the Tamil-Brāhmī script, its origin and its orthography. He goes on to deal with the grammar of Tamil-Brāhmī, phonology, morphology and lexical analysis. The determination of the historical data contained in these Tamil-Brāhmī inscriptions is attempted by him. But by far the most fundamental question to which he addressed himself is the connection of the Tamil-Brāhmī script with the pictographic Hārappan script. He concludes that the former is derived from the Hārappan script. Bold and striking as his view is, it still remains to be conclusively proved. In fact the real identification of the Indus script and its relation with a known language can be determined only if we get a bilingual inscription in the Indus script and another script which has been already identified.

*Hero-Stones : (Naṭukal) :* Subsequent to the Tamil-Brāhmī inscriptions in the caverns and pottery, there appeared inscriptions engraved on hero-stones. Tolkāppiyam speaks of

“காட்சி கால் கோள் நீர்ப்படை நடுகல் ” (புறத். 5)

That the hero-stones often contained the name of the hero is seen from a reference in Puranānūṭu:

“அணி மயிற் பிலிதுட்டிப் பெயர் பொறித்து இனி நட்டனரே கல்லும்.” (Puram. 60)

Generally on the hero stones, either at the top or bottom, details like the name of the hero, the name of the king of the place, his regnal year, when and how the hero met with his death were engraved. Tolkāppiyam speaks of six stages in the ritual ceremonies associated with the erection of hero stones. They were (1) Kāṭchi (காட்சி) i.e. discovery, (2) Kāl Kōl (கால கோள்) i.e. invitation, (3) Nirpaṭai (நிர்ப்ப படை) i.e. bathing of the stone, (4) Naḍutal (நடுதல்) i.e. erection, (5) Perumpadai (பெரும் படை) offering of food and (6) Vālttu (வாழ்த்து) Blessing. Obviously, considerable importance was attached to the ceremonies of ancestor worship associated with the erection of hero-stones which incidentally throw some light on the social and political history of the early times. In this context mention may be made of the book on the Cheṅgam hero-stones in North Arcot, published by Dr. Nagaswamy. The hero-stones of Cheṅgam are datable from the 5th century A.D. to 16th century A.D. Though he has also referred to some other hero stones of Tamilaham and Kērala, doubtless there are many others still to be discovered and deciphered. Mailai Seenī Venkataswamy rightly thinks that all the hero stones belonging to the Saṅgam age have not been unearthed.<sup>8</sup>

However, the hero stones of Cheṅgam themselves raise certain intricate problems of chronology. Most of the Cheṅgam hero stones belong to the age of the Great Pallavas, specifically to the time of the Pallava kings, Simhavishṇu, Mahēndravarman I, Narasimhavarman I, Nandivarman II and Kampavarman. Excepting those of the time of Kampavarman, the others are all in Vatteluttu script. Startling facts are found in these inscriptions. For instance, Simhavishṇu is found to have reigned for more than thirty years while Mahēndravarman I ruled for no less than sixty years. Is there some mistake somewhere? Are the earlier sources unreliable? It is not too easy to give a definite answer. It needs further scrutiny and

examination. However, the age of the Great Pallavas witnessed the appearance of several long epigraphs in stone and metal. The copper plates are more important and descriptive than the stone inscriptions. The Pallavas were great patrons of learning and they bestowed liberal grants to learned brāhmaṇins as well as to Jaina savants. The court language of the Great Pallavas was Sanskrit. Till the 4th century A. D. the Pallava inscriptions were in Prakrit and thereafter they were in Sanskrit. From the 7th century they were bilingual, partly in Sanskrit and partly in Tamil in Grantha script. This practice of adopting bilingualism in epigraphy continued for several centuries. The Sanskrit portion contained general exhortations, blessings, names and the achievements of the donors, while the Tamil portion invariably dealt with the boundaries and other details of the lands and other properties gifted. As examples the Pallāṅkōvil copper plates and the Kūram Plates may be mentioned. One of the copper plates recently discovered near Vēlañjēri near Tiruttāṇi is dated in the 9th regnal year of the reign of Pallava Aparājita of the 9th century A.D. The Tamil portion states that Aparājita ordered 1000 Kādi of paddy to be provided for offerings to God Subrahmaṇia enshrined on the top of the Tiruttāṇi hill. It shows incidentally that the famous Tiruttāṇi temple was not constructed by Krishṇadēva Rāya but only renovated by him.

It may be noted that the Unnaguruvayampālayam plates and the Udayēndiram Ceppēḍugal I were completely in Sanskrit. There was no Tamil portion in them.

The Takua-pa (Siam), or modern Thailand, fragmentary inscription in Tamil is in the 9th century characters. It shows that the Pallava kingdom during the period of Nandivarman III's reign had active commercial relationship with the South East Asian countries. It records the

construction of a tank called Śrī Avanināraṇam by the chief of Nāṅgūr and the placing of it under the protection of maṇikkirāmattār.

*The inscriptions of the Pāṇḍyas :*

Apart from the legends and the Śaṅgam classics which deal with the early Pāṇḍyas, there are several valuable epigraphs of the post-Śaṅgam age. These are the important plates like the Vēlvikkudi grant of Parāntaka Neđuñjađayan, the smaller Sinnamanūr Plates, the larger Sinnamanūr Plates of Rājasimha and the Madras Museum Plates of Jaṭilavarman. Besides, there are numerous stone inscriptions of this period which are of supreme value in fixing the chronology of certain Pāṇḍyan kings. The Ānamalai stone inscription of Parāntaka is dated in the year 3871 of the Kaliyuga era and calculated on the basis of that it is clear that the inscription must have appeared in A. D. 770. Again, the Aivarmalai inscription of Varaguṇa is dated in Śaka 792, which corresponds to A.D. 870 and since the inscription is stated to have belonged to the eighth regnal year of the king, the date of the commencement of his reign is determinable. In spite of several doubts and posers about the so-called First Pāṇḍyan Empire, the data indicated above are of decisive help to the student of Pāṇḍyan history.

In determining the dates, the eras mentioned in inscriptions are of crucial value. In respect of Pāṇḍyan history the Kaliyuga era and the Śaka era are the most important. The Kaliyuga era is taken to have appeared in 3102 B.C., when the Mahābhārata war is said to have commenced. The Śaka era corresponds to A. D. 78 and it is believed by some to have been founded by a Śaka king who occupied Ujjaini 137 years after Vikramāditya. Others think that Kanishka was the founder of this era while still others

hold that Vēma Kādphises was the author of the era. Of these various views suggested it is likely that the theory that Kanishka was the founder of the era is the correct one because of his military prowess and religious eminence. The Śaka era was known in South India as the Śālivāhana Śakābda.

There are several other eras which appear in Indian history like the Vikrama era, the Gupta era, the Saptarshi era and so on. But in respect of South India the Kollam era which commenced in 824-25 A. D. is important. The absence of a common era in respect of ancient Indian history is a serious obstacle to the reconstruction of the early history of the country.

A peculiar feature of the early Pāṇḍyan inscriptions is that they speak of the regnal years of the monarchs in double dates, X years opposite Y years. The exact meaning of this is not clear. Various epigraphists like Burgess, Hultzch, T.A. Gopinātha Rao and Venkayya have furnished different explanations, none of which is convincing. In actuality the procedure adopted is to add up the two figures and reckon the actual year as equivalent to  $X + Y$  years.

But though no convincing explanation has been offered so far, this appears to be correct as is inferred from the instance provided by the Larger Sinnamanur Plates where the regnal year ‘இரண்டாவதின் எதிர் பதினுண்காவது’ is rendered in the Sanskrit part of the grant as ‘Sōḍasē Rājyavarṣe.’

Again, some inscriptions give the regnal year and the number of days since the commencement of the current regnal year. The lack of uniformity in this matter causes difficulties. Further, the astronomical data provided by some inscriptions create posers because they yield strange and divergent dates. As Prof. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri has pointed

out, Inscription No. 422 of 1917 is referred to as belonging to A.D. 1357 on page 112 and to A.D. 1445 on page 113 of A.R.E. 1917-8. Again, on page 89 A.R.E., 1923-4, we find Nos. 327 and 334 of 1923 with calculated dates as A.D. 1278 and A.D. 1417 respectively ascribed to the same king. In all probability the data furnished in respect of the same king might have caused the variation. It has been claimed very recently by N. Sethuraman in his book on "The Chōlas-Mathematics reconstructs the Chōlas" that astronomical data can never go wrong. This is perhaps too optimistic a view. How then do we explain the discrepancies in the calculations of Dr. E. Hultzch, J. F. Fleet, L. D. Swamikkannu pillai and others? Moreover, the calculations of some chronologists are not accepted by historians and linguistic chauvinists. For instance, the conclusions of L. D. Swamikkannu Pillai in respect of Paripādal and Śilappadi-kāram had been questioned by several writers some of whom held that the calculations have been made on inadequate data. True, he had to depend more on Adiyārkkunallar's commentary of Śilappadikāram. But in recent years some scholars like Prof. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri who had questioned the 8th century date assigned by Swamikkannu Pillai, have reverted to the chronologist's date. Paripādal, too, is now considered like Kalittogai and Tirumurugārruppādai a later work among the Saṅgam classics. In this context it is significant to remember that the Saṅgam Tamils themselves had astronomical knowledge as is evident from the Puranānūru and Paripādal. They designated the stars and the planets as Kōl.

In respect of Chōla chronology though Sethuraman himself is unable to solve certain riddles, his approach is commendable, and he can turn his attention to the history of the Pāṇḍyas where the problems to be tackled are more acute.

At the outset, besides stone inscriptions four Copper Plate records of the early Pāṇḍyas had been discovered. These are the Copper Plates of VēlviKKudi, ŚrīvaraMāṅgalam and Śinna-mānūr (two sets). Now, apart from these four records which throw light on the history of the First Pāṇḍyan Empire, ranging from about the 7th to the 10th century A.D., two more were newly discovered in 1958. These two are the Daļavāipuram and Śivakāśi Plates. These throw fresh light on this period of Pāṇḍyan history. Let us consider the details furnished by them.

*The Daļavāipuram Plates of Viranārāyaṇa :*

They were discovered near the Daļavāipuram village in the Tirunelvēli District. Parāntaka Viranārāyaṇa was the donor of this grant; he was the grandson of Parāntaka Nedūñjadayan (accn. A.D. 768), the donor of the VēlviKKudi grant. Varaguṇa Pāṇḍya, the brother of Viranārāyaṇa who ascended the throne about A.D. 862, was of a religious disposition and from the present inscription it is learnt that Viranārāyaṇa was ruling jointly with his brother for at least 45 years (Prof. Sastri had assigned him only 20 years) and that he gave the gift while camping at Karavandapuram. Māraṇ, apparently identical with Śri Māra Śrīvallabha, was the father of Varaguṇa and Parāntaka Viranārāyaṇa.

In this Copper Plate, however, Viranārāyaṇa is said to have defeated his elder brother at Śennilam. It is not known whether this brother was Varaguṇa, or some other person about whom we do not know anything else, because as far as our knowledge goes, the relationship between Varaguṇa and Viranārāyaṇa was cordial.

Viranārāyaṇa acquired Vilijñam, conquered the territory of the Koṅgu to Tēnūr, captured Vīra Tuṅgan and established numerous Brahmadēyas and Dēvasthānas. In his 45th

regnal year while he was camping in the village of Kaļakkudi, a brāhmaṇin (Śrī Nārāyaṇa Kēśavan) represented to him that Kađungōn who had vanquished the Kalappālaṛ (note the word (கன்புபழைஞர்) in the inscription gifted the villages Tirumaṅgalam and Somajikkūrichchi to twelve pious brahmaṇins. Now Śrī Narāyaṇa Keśavan requested the king to combine the two villages and restore them to him who was entitled to enjoy the two villages.

The Sanskrit portion of the Plates, consisting of 39 verses describe the Praśasti of the donor and his ancestors. Parāntaka Vīraṇārāyaṇa's mother was Akkaļanimmadi of the Pottappi family. He defeated his elder brother at Šennilandai. Was he Varaguṇa, and if so, was Varaguṇa born of a different mother?

However, three facts are notable; one is that the duration of the rule given to Vīraṇārāyaṇa by the Daļavāipuram Plates is different from that provided by the Larger Sinnamanūr Plates; the second is that the practice of incorporating Praśastis in inscriptions had appeared prior to the time of Rāja Rāja I the Chōla, who was believed by early historians to have initiated the practice, and thirdly certain details about the Pāṇḍyan genealogy and the Kaļabhras which were doubted by some scholars are clearly settled.

The Daļavāipuram Plates which Dr. B. G. L. Swamy dismisses as containing routine details, bring out the important facts regarding the Pāṇḍyan genealogy and the attack of Tamil Nādu by the Kaļabhras, give the lie direct to his contentions. He holds the following ideas:

(1) The first is regarding Palyāgaśālai mudu kuđumi Peruvaludi. Dr. Swamy says: "Scholars who attempted to reconstruct the genealogies of the presumed kings of the 'Caṅkam age' could not accommodate Mudukudmi". Does

he discard the colophons to the Puram Verses 7, 9, 12, 15 and 64 of Puranānūru? If Kanakasabhai and Pandarathar left him out of Pāṇḍyan genealogy that is no reason why Dr. Swamy should follow them. If Sivaraja Pillai thought that ‘yāga’ could not have been performed so early, reference can be made to verses 122, 166, 224, 361, 397 and 400 to disprove his contention. Any inconvenient fact cannot be dismissed as an interpolation. Prof. K. A. N. Sastri first excluded him and then later said that he was a “more life-like figure than Nediyōn.” All these run counter to Dr. Swami’s stand. His contention that Palyāgaśālai was only Tēr Māraṇ or Rājasimha is not convincing. Tēr can be taken in the usual sense. Tēr is used also in the sense of ‘learned’ in the Daļavāipuram Plates.

(2) ‘Alavariyā ādhirājas’ has been translated by Krishna Sastri as ‘driving away numberless great kings.’ The exaggeration, if any, is pardonable. We have many instances of such exaggerations in inscriptions.

(3) Nor can ‘Kali Araśan’ mean anything but cruel or wicked. As Dr. Swamy himself admits, Srinivasa Aiyangar and several other writers understood the words in this sense. One cannot discard the meaning just to suit one’s own preconceived notions.

(4) Dr. Swamy contends that the Kalabhras do not figure in the history of Tamil Nādu. He ignores the reference to ‘Kaļabhra’ in the Vēlyikkudi Plates and to ‘Kalappāļar’ in the Daļavaipuram Plates. The coins discovered by Ramayya containing the word Kaļabhra are thrown into the sea by Dr. Swamy, perhaps because some of them were obtained from a fisherman at Kāvērippūmpaṭṭinam. It is incomprehensible that the name Kaļabhra and what is worse ‘Kaļabhra interregnum’ are anathema to him. The

obvious reason is that scholars, Tamilologists in particular, associate the decline of the Śaṅgam and the advent of a dark age with the Kaṭabhras. But the grounds for his contention are not sound. Incidentally it must be urged that the ‘Chāṅgam’ was not held in the Presidency College, or University buildings or in a Seminar Hall. It was often in the court of a cultured king or chieftain or in the company of some learned persons or at times in solitude or in the company of a lover that many of their outpourings emanated.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the existence of a ‘Chāṅkam’ or its collapse need not at all depend on the historicity of the Kaṭabhrās. It is also worthwhile remembering that some of the ‘Chāṅgam Maruviya Nūlkaṭ’ including several of the Padinenkilkāṇakku poems appeared in the so-called dark age.

(5) However, his aversion to the Śaṅgam led him on, I presume, to lionize the Western Gangas and dismantle the Kaṭabhras. The burden of his song is that Palyāgaśālai Mudukudumi Peruvaludi was none other than Tēr Māraṇ or Rajasimha I, that the duration of the so-called Kaṭabhra rule was confined to about two years and that even this foreign rule was that of the Western Gaṅgas. It must be remembered that while the Kaṭabhras are mentioned in both the Plates as invaders, the Gaṅgas figure in the Vēlvikkudi Plates only in two contexts, once as the Āṇatti of the restoration of Vēlvikkudi to its heir as Māraṅgāri, the gem of the Vaidyaka family and secondly when the daughter of the Gaṅga king was given in marriage to the Koṅgu king in which context he defeated a Pallava and other kings. There is no reference to the Western Gaṅga king having established his rule in Madurai or the Pāṇḍyan kingdom. Koṅgarkōn is not a Pāṇḍya king; it is used to denote the king of Koṅgunādu; it is also a term denoting the Chēras.

(6) The basic weakness of the contention of Dr. Swamy (and Prof. K. A. N. Sastri) is that they state that 'Narkorṛan should have lived through all these generations from Mudukudumi to Neḍuñjadayan. Here it must be noted that the first was Narkorṛan (line 35 misprinted as line 31) and the second who prayed for the return of the piece of land was Naṛchiṅgan (really line 117 and not 103). This cuts the ground from underneath the feet of these scholars.

In fact what I feel is that the time is gone by when chauvinism and regionalism as well as pseudo-scientific attitude vitiated the entire approach. The field of research is neither a Sultanate nor a Tzardom; it is a republic - not under any emergency - where the humblest labourer has a right to be heard and even opposed if necessary.

#### *The Śivakāśi Plates of Vira Pāṇḍya:*

These form the second set of Plates unearthed recently. The father of Vira Pāṇḍya, the donor of the Śivakāśi Plates, was Māṇābharaṇa, while Vira Pāṇḍya's brother was Sundara Pāṇḍya. From certain Chōla inscriptions it is seen that all these three Pāṇḍyas (living at the same time) were defeated by Rājādhirājan. Therefore, Prof. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri held that these Plates were issued by Vira Pāṇḍya early in the 11th century.

But T. N. Subramanian who had made a more intensive study of the Tamil inscriptions than the professional archaeologists, held that this Vira Pāṇḍya belonged to the 10th century A.D. (accn. A. D. 946) and that contemporaneous with him there were Māṇābharaṇan and Sundara Pāṇḍya. This Vira Pāṇḍya was identified by him with 'Chōlan Talai Konḍa Vira Pāṇḍyan.' But there was more than one 'Chōlan talai-konḍa Vira Pāṇḍya.' Moreover, Subramanian's primary basis for his view is palaeography, which cannot obviously be a

conclusive source of deduction, particularly in differentiating epigraphs of two succeeding centuries. While Prof. Sastri's view seems to be acceptable, it is surprising that he does not make the position clear in his *Cōlas* (1975) on page 222 where he merely states : "One version of Rājādhirāja's praśasti mentions as an introduction to the war with the three Pāṇḍyas mentions a conflict with and subjugation of a certain Vikramanārāyaṇa." One wishes that the identification of the three Pāṇḍyas was clearly made. However, his reference to the three Pāṇḍyan opponents and Rājādhirāja in his *Pāṇḍyan Kingdom* (1929) on page 122 is more specific and clears the doubt on the accuracy of the concerned Chōla inscription.

Dr. Swamy complains about Prof. Sastri's frequent changes of his interpretations. There is no harm in this if it is inevitable and if it is clearly indicated.

#### *The Kudumiyāmalai inscription :*

One of the famous inscriptions of early South India is the musical inscription of Kudumiyāmalai in the old Pudukkottai State. Excepting the music inscription at Tirumayam, a little south of Pudukkottai town, the celebrated Kudumiyāmalai inscription is the unique one of its kind in the whole of India. It has been generally assigned to Mahēndravarman I. Latterly some scholars have suggested that since Kudumiyāmalai and Tirumayam were far away from Mahēndravarman's capital and that they were near the Pāṇḍyan kingdom, these inscriptions must have appeared under the patronage of the Pāṇḍyan kings, and that they must have belonged to a date few centuries later than Mahēndravarman's time. But the characters of the Kudumiyāmalai and Tirumayam inscriptions are similar to the Pallava script of the 7th century A. D. As Dr. Minakshi has pointed out years ago, the formation of the letters is comparable

to that of Mahēndra's inscriptions at Tiruchchirappalli and South Arcot. Moreover, one of the birudas of Mahēndravarman I was 'Saṅkīrṇa Jāti' which means according to Prof. Sambamurti that the king was an expert in the exposition of Saṅkīrṇa rāgās or mixed rāgās. Apparently he was very proficient in music.

The Kuḍumiyāmalai inscription is in Sanskrit; but it is interesting to note that just below the colophon, an important note in Tamil characters is found. This was supposed to read as "Ettīkkum Yēlirkum ivai uriyavai." It means that the musical notes indicated in the inscriptions are intended for the eight and seven. A label inscribed on the top of the northern side as "Parvadini" has been identified as "Parvadini" which meant the *Vīna*. The Tamil note in the colophon is therefore taken to mean that the musical notes found in the inscription can be played on the seven stringed and eight-stringed *vīna*. This appears to be the acceptable view. K. R. Srinivasan takes it as "பாட்டுற்கும் யாழிற்கும் இவை உரியவை". But obviously the former interpretation is meaningful and correct, particularly in view of the word "Parvadini" found on the northern side of the rock.

A part of the musical inscription at Tirumayam was erased by a later Pāṇḍyan king for recording a gift of his to a temple.

#### *Chōla inscriptions :*

If the epoch of the Imperial Chōlas (850–1200) was the golden age of Tamil culture particularly of Tamil literature, it was equally famous in the sphere of Tamil epigraphy. The Chōla inscriptions discovered so far are nearly 9000 in number. But the inscriptions useful for the study of the administration of the Chōla kingdom are unfortunately below 10% of the total number.

In respect of chronology, apart from the later Chōla inscriptions, the accession of Parāntaka I is reckoned by counting the number of days that had elapsed since the commencement of the Kaliyuga on the basis of the details found in an epigraph. This datum provides a dependable chronological foothold on the basis of which Kielhorn fixed the date of Parāntaka's accession between 15th January and 25th July 907. This constitutes the sheet anchor of Chōla chronology of this period.

Recently the State Department of Archaeology has brought to light a copper plate which is the earliest copper plate charter of the Chōla dynasty so far known. The plate gives some interesting details about the genealogy of the Chōlas. The Plate states that Vijayālaya was the grandson of one Kōchcheṅgaṇān and son of Ōtriyūran. We do not have confirmation of these facts. It is not possible to determine whether this Kōchcheṅgaṇān is identical with the ruler of the same name figuring in the Śaṅgam age. Perhaps he was a different ruler.

The Chōla Praśastis provide in a grandiloquent manner the achievements of the donor and of his predecessors. They were worded in an ornate and poetic style, often containing gross exaggerations. In fact some of the Meykkirtigal seem to sound like Poykkirtigal. At times the praśastis of some kings were confused with those of others. Nevertheless, several of them are of value in determining the chronology and history of the reigns of the Chōla monarchs.

Inscriptions have been found mostly on stone and some on copper plates and other materials. Writings on stone were on rocks, pillars, slabs, pedestals or on the back of images, rims and lids of vases, caskets etc., the walls of

temples, the pavement of pillars of colonnades, caves etc. As mentioned earlier, South India is much richer in its epigraphy than North India. Within South India itself Tamil Nādu has the highest record.

Among metals, copper was commonly employed for engraving inscriptions. They were called Cheppēḍugal in Tamil, Tāmrapata, Tāmraśāsana, Śāsanapatṛa etc, in Sanskrit. The use of copper for writing purposes was not very common up to the 6th century A.D. and it became popular in the succeeding six or seven centuries. Copper plates were apt to be fabricated in order to establish false titles to property or other claims. Inscriptions on brass, bronze, silver and gold vessels or images are found; but they are rare.

The contents of the inscriptions in Tamil Nādu, whether they are of the Pallavas, Pāṇḍyas, Chōlas or feudatory dynasties like the Muttaraiyar or of individuals like Kopperuñjiṅga can be grouped under the following heads, namely, dedicatory, donative, commemorative, administrative, religious and didactic, and occasionally commercial.

By far the largest number of inscriptions were donatory and commemorative. Gifts made to temples, māthas, particular deities, groups of brāhmīns and individuals figured prominently. The victories of kings were recorded in several inscriptions. Some recorded sales, mortgages and other forms of transfers of property. Further, decisions of disputes between different classes of people or political agreements between different feudatories or chieftains were also engraved. A remarkably valuable inscription is found in Tiruviḍaivayil in Tanjavur District which preserves a Dēvāram of Tirujñāna Sambandar, not known otherwise.

Nagaswamy has shown how some inscriptions of the Chōla period throw light on the protests of the people on the levy of heavy taxes. For example, Parāntaka I imposed a tax of 3000 kalāñju in A. D. 945, when he was involved in a war with the Pāñyan kingdom; in A. D. 1065 Vīrarājēndra levied a surcharge of one Kalāñju when he fought with the Vēṅgi kingdom; and even Rāja Rāja I levied an additional tax of 100 Kāśus for the embellishment of the Talaicheṅgādu temple. Protests made by the people were disregarded by him. Rāja Rāja I ordered the confiscation of lands of those who refused to pay the additional tax. The Tiruvidaimarudūr inscription of A. D. 1000 states that they were made to lie in water or stand in the blazing sun for several hours; their lands also were confiscated. That even articles belonging to them were destroyed is seen from the 13th century inscription at Nāmakkal. Consequently no-tax campaigns and crude patterns of non-cooperation with the Government were adopted by the people. At times the Government had to reduce the heavy levies. These and similar inscriptions of the Chōlas are of immense interest to the student of social history.

Historically accurate inscriptions are not many. One inscription at Tiruvēndipuram is an exception. It describes accurately the troubles and difficulties encountered by Rāja Rāja III and the help he received from his Hoysala contemporary. This is almost an exceptionally authentic and unvarnished record.

Actually in the utilisation of the inscriptions great care has to be bestowed. False claims of victories are sometimes recorded. Some inscriptions contain accounts of legendary kings as found in the Kanyākumari stone inscription. Determination of chronology is a formidable problem. Though several epigraphists like Kielhorn, Fleet, Burgess and Venkayya

have worked on the inscriptions, certain wrong calculations have appeared. As Sethuraman points out in his recent book ‘The Chōlas’ the accession date of Rājēndra I has been definitely fixed only now as 19th June, while divergent dates were given earlier. Again, it is now settled on the basis of astronomical data that Rājādhirāja I ascended the throne on 8th June A.D. 1018. Earlier, Kielhorn could only arrive at an approximate date, viz. 23rd May A.D. 1018. Another instance is that of the date of accession of Vikrama Chōla. This was surmised as 29th June 1118 but now Sethuraman has revised it as 13th July A.D. 1118. Whether the new calculations are all correct remain to be settled.

Certain earlier conclusions regarding the identification of monarchs have now to be revised. Prof. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri has stated on p. 292 of his ‘Cōlas’ (1975) thus : “After the death of Virarājēndra, Kulōttunga marched into the Chōla country in good time to get himself accepted as king.” But this hypothesis seems to be impossible as shown by Sethuraman, in view of the position of Adhi Rājēndra and his inscriptions.

Then the titles Rājakēsari and his Parakēsari, used alternatively by the Chōla kings sometimes cause confusion. For example, Rājamahēndra was a Rājakēsari who ruled from 1059 to 1063. His younger brother who succeeded him must have been a Parakēsari. But really he is known as Rājakēsari.

Perhaps the most serious difficulty arises from spurious inscriptions which have appeared. Several fake documents have been unearthed. The inscriptions of Tiruppattūr, Kālayarkōil, Iraniyūr, Pērichchikkōvil and Ilāyānkudi are some of them. These inscriptions have to be carefully studied. Sethuraman shows how some spurious inscriptions were discovered and the persons responsible for them were punished. For example, Inscriptions No. 126 and 127 of 1908

of Tiruppattūr, all dated A. D. 1387, are very remarkable in this respect. An accountant of the village wanted to inherit certain rights for which he was not entitled. He conspired with a goldsmith and an engraver. The engraver engraved a false document on the stone wall of the temple as if the privileges and rights were given by the village assembly to the accountant. Somehow the matter leaked out. The village accountant disappeared. The goldsmith and the engraver were caught and were entrusted with the Kammālar who killed them for intentional forgery and fraud.

Another example is found in an apparently forged copper plate in which certain people known as Yōgi para-dēśis of Akkarai, the adjoining village of Śucindram, put forward claims to certain privileges in the temple at Śucindram<sup>6</sup>.

Pērichchikkōvil and Iraniyūr contain fake records. Prof. K. A. N. Sastri had originally suspected the authenticity of these two records and had stated so in his 'Pāṇḍyan kingdom'. But in his 'Cōlas' he has given a different conclusion. In fact Sethuraman after visiting the two places says that they are fake and spurious.

Again, it must be remembered even in respect of bona-fide inscriptions, that all that is found engraved on stone cannot be taken as gospel truth. It must be remembered that the actual wording of the inscriptions might not have been completely framed by the donors themselves.

The details of the inscription were, more often than not, left to the ingenuity of the śilpi who executed the engraving. Naturally, the conventional style of framing the epigraphs would have determined in a large measure their form and even their details. This feature accounts for certain otherwise inexplicable anachronisms and incongruous statements appearing in several inscriptions.

Moreover, errors in the actual engraving are occasionally responsible for creating difficulties to the student of history. Slovenliness or inefficiency on the part of the *śilpi* might have been responsible for some mistakes. Several words occurring in the inscriptions of Śucindram, for instance, have not been made out<sup>7</sup>.

Some of the inscriptions have been partly or wholly erased. A few have been damaged. In respect of some new constructions have been erected over places where inscriptions had been engraved. Dr. Hultzch deplored how the renovation of the Ēkāmbaranāthar temple at Kāñchipuram would destroy certain inscriptions. Actually the apprehended destruction did take place. He wrote with feeling: "What the Mussalmāns did not destroy is being demolished by pious Hindus!"

Besides, some of the inscriptions about which we hear from other inscriptions are not now traceable. Some of these inscriptions are those of Triumanaikkāval, Jambukēśvaram, Tiruvidaimarudūr, Nīdūr, Tirukkaravāśal, Mayūram, Śivapuram, Ālaṅgudi and other places have not been discovered.

It is a lamentable feature that even the available epigraphic matter has not been appropriately used. For instance, Prof. Sastri's monumental book on the Chōlas was first written on the basis of the findings discovered upto 1935. The book was re-edited in 1955 and reprinted in 1975. But the epigraphic findings secured between 1935 and 1975 were not made use of in the later publications. Thus the available inscriptions must be traced and copied, remembering that some of the temples are not in good preservation and some are in ruins. Those epigraphs which are traced must be published and in their turn they must be promptly and

appropriately utilised. Then alone the history of Tamil Nādu will be properly re-written. In this study some of the prominent inscriptions alone are indicated.

Finally there is a supreme need for co-ordination between various institutions and individuals working in this field. There must be co-operation between the Archaeological Survey, Epigraphic Society, State Departments of Archaeology, Universities, learned private bodies interested in History and Archaeology and also the Trustees of Temples. Then alone inscriptions can be discovered, copied, interpreted and edited and utilised for the reconstruction of history.

## **NOTES**

1. 'Valudi' is a Pāṇḍyan title as may be seen, for example in Ahanānūru: 93:3, 130:11, 204:2; Naggiṇai; 150:4, 358:10; Kuṭuntogai: 345.
  2. Kaṭungō perhaps, as Thiru Arunachalam thinks, refers to Pālaipādiya Perunkaṭungō of the Chēra family. He was a poet and prince.
  3. Āraichchi-Vol. I, No. 2, p. 190. See also the paper on Hero stones and Folk Beliefs by M. Vanamamalai (Journal of Tamil Studies, December 1972, pp. 38-43).
  4. To the best of our knowledge, the word 'Saṅgam' occurs in Appar's Dēvāram (Tiruppattūr Tiruttāṇḍaham. 3). But even earlier, in Kalittogai Verses 35 and 68 references are found to the assemblage of talented poets.
  5. This account is found in Sethuraman's book on Chōlas, p. 166 quoted from South Indian Temple Inscription, vol. III, Pt. II, p. 221.
  6. See the author's Sucindram Temple, pp. 201-2.
  7. Ibid, p. 447.
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## XII. Early Indian "Imperialism" in the Far East

Mr. Chester Bowles, the American Ambassador to India from October 1951 to March 1953, compares the principal features of the European and Asian imperialisms of the past in a lucid article contributed to the 'New York Times Magazine' of 5th September, 1954. He tries to show that the alleged blemishes of Western imperialism were not altogether peculiar to the Europeans but were more or less similar to those employed by the Asians themselves. The Westerners often justified their imperialism on the ground that it was their duty to redeem and civilise the backward people; they spoke of it as the 'Whiteman's burden'. Mr. Chester Bowles points out that Indian expansion in the Far East is attempted to be justified on the selfsame grounds and that, in essence, there is little difference between the so-called 'White man's burden' and what may be described in the same strain as the 'Brown man's burden'. He suggests that the one description is as hypocritical as the other.

Though certain other controversial matters which are of topical interest are also touched upon by Mr. Chester Bowles in his article, what concerns the student of history is his excessive simplification of the features of early Indian expansion in the Far East and his attempt to draw a parallel between them and those of Western imperialism of later days. He seems to suggest that Rudyard Kipling has his Indian counterpart in Prime Minister Nehru himself, who writes with pride about the glories achieved by Indians in South-East Asia—in Šrī Laṅka, Malaya, Jāvā, Sumatra, Bōrneō, Bali and Cambōdja. Several other Indian writers, too,

enthusiastically claim that the Hindu colonists carried the light of culture and civilisation to the backward regions with zeal and unselfish devotion. It may be admitted at once that there is a certain measure of resemblance in the claims registered by both the European and Indian apologists of colonialism.

In both the cases, commerce was the original objective of colonisation, which eventually led to imperialism. Besides, in both, the eagerness of the colonists to introduce their religious beliefs and institutions in their new homes produced striking results. Nor were the efforts undertaken by the colonists, European and Indian, to confer the blessings of their civilisations on the respective indigenous populations totally dissimilar. Nevertheless, there are fundamental differences, which the objective student of history can ill afford to ignore.

At the outset it may be observed that whereas the Westerners were, more often than not, temporary settlers and birds of passage in the colonies, the Indians made them their permanent homes. It is abundantly clear that the European expansion since the 19th century was for the most part undertaken for purposes other than for permanent residence in the colonies. Though colonialism was advocated as an outlet for the surplus population, yet in practice, this objective has not proved a potent factor in respect of modern European colonisation. On the other hand, the Indian colonies in South-East can, with greater justification, be compared to the earlier European colonies like those of Britain in North America,<sup>1</sup> or to the Greek colonies of ancient days.

Nor did the Indians constitute an exclusive caste or an alien community in their colonies like the Europeans, perhaps

with the exception of the Dutch in Indonesia.<sup>2</sup> The Indian colonists mixed with the indigenous people and often inter-married with them; in course of time there occurred a fusion of the settlers with the original inhabitants. Becoming children of the soil, the colonists identified themselves with the indigenous people. Nor is there any evidence to show that the Indian colonists in South-East Asia ever attempted either to extirpate the natives in order to preserve their purity of blood or to reduce them to a position of bondage or isolation.<sup>3</sup> A policy of exclusiveness might have enabled the colonists to perpetuate their supremacy over the natives. When the colonists, intent on continuing their overlordship, adopt schemes which serve to fortify their power the people of the soil would never become civilised enough to aspire for any responsible position in the administration, but would have to remain content with their lot as hewers of wood and drawers of water. The Western colonial administration was guilty of keeping all positions of trust and responsibility in their own hands, affording little chance for the natives to acquire administrative experience. G. D. H. Cole states thus : 'They (white colonial merchants and business managers) either resist all attempts to improve the status and to widen the opportunities of the native intellectuals, or, if they have progressive inclinations, are yet so impressed by the need for caution and for a long period of tutelage as to favour a pace of advance towards self-government that is much too slow to satisfy the more active spirits, who are thus forced into resentful hostility.'<sup>4</sup>

Nor were the Indian colonies subjected to any policy of exploitation by the mother country. Except the mutual advantages of commerce, no other material gains were aimed at by the colonising state. In this respect again, it is needless to state that the European colonists of modern times have proved themselves woefully guilty of their colonies.

Cheap labour, as well as raw materials including such commodities as oil, rubber, tin and other mineral resources were all obtained at unduly favourable conditions to the great benefit of the industrialised mother countries. Several years ago Chautemps, the French Minister of Colonies, openly confessed that he was in reality a second Minister of Commerce. Export and import duties were manipulated so as to produce exclusive commercial advantages to the mother country. Colonies were also utilised as fruitful theatres for the investment of surplus capital as well as for the development of banks. The French economist, Paul Leroy Beaulieu, observed in 1886: 'The same capital which will earn three or four per cent in agricultural improvements in France will bring ten, fifteen, twenty per cent in agricultural enterprise in the United States, Canada, La Plata, Australia or New Zealand.' We see clearly the reason why the investment of French capital in foreign countries, rapidly increasing after the middle of the 19th century, reached a total of fifty billion francs by 1914, why British capitalists before 1914 invested two billion pounds sterling in British colonies or dependencies and almost two in other undeveloped countries, and why the Germans invested twenty-eight billion marks abroad before 1914.<sup>5</sup> In this connection it is significant to observe that Delcasse, who was later to become the guiding genius of French imperialism, stressed in 1895 the need of governmental protection and aid for French investments in the colonies. Doubtless, the subject countries and the daughter colonies have benefited by these policies in a considerable measure; but the principal gains went to the imperialist power. Leroy-Beaulieu, the French writer, was true to his conviction when he stated thus: 'The nation that colonises is the premier nation; if it is not to-day, it will be tomorrow.' Clearly this is a frank confession that the benefit to the colonials was not the principal consideration which weighed with the imperialist mother country.

It is undeniable that since the second half of the 19th century there appeared in Europe a strong wave of imperialism surcharged by politico-economic nationalism. Benjamin Disraeli and Joseph Chamberlain in Britain, Jules Ferry and St. Hilaire in France, Friedrich List and Treitschke in Germany, to mention but a few examples, were all barefaced imperialists. Joseph Chamberlain, preaching the doctrine of stark commercial imperialism, proclaimed that 'The British Empire is commerce,' and urged how British capital, British workmen and British manufacturers must have a market through colonies. Jules Ferry, the logical exponent of French imperialism, proved the validity of the doctrine that an industrial and maritime nation needs colonies. Britain, France and later Germany, as well as Russia and Japan, all entered the race for colonialism, and little wonder that, by the beginning of this century, more than half of the world's land surface and more than a billion human beings were included in the colonies and 'backward' countries, dominated by a few imperialist nations.

The story of Indian expansion to the Far Eastern countries does not by any means belong to this pattern. There is little doubt that the foundation of the Hindu kingdoms in these regions followed in the wake of peaceful commercial intercourse. In the beginning, stray batches of mariners, merchants and emigrants settled in a few places and applied themselves to their business. However, they prepared the way for the advent of carriers of more abiding cultural influences. What Winstedt says of Malaya seems typical of other Indian colonies in South-East Asia. He writes: 'There is no evidence that the arrival of Hindus in the Malay world was sudden, or violent or overwhelming. A ship or so came with the monsoon to exchange beads and magic amulets for gold, tin, ivory, camphor and those rare medicines,

rhinoceros-horns and bezoars, the latter stone-like agglomerates of salts found in coconut, jackfruit and bamboo, snake, pig, monkey and dragon, and universally esteemed as antidotes against plague and poison. Here and there a passenger practised magic, that proved potent in love or war or disease. Another won regard as a warrior. Some married local brides. Priests came and taught a new ritual in Sanskrit, awe-inspiring, as Arabic was to be later, because it was unintelligible to the multitude. For daily speech the newcomers, evidently because they were sparse, adopted the languages of Malaysia and introduced very few words of their own colloquial Prakrit. In time a few married into leading Indonesian families and brought Hindu ideas of kingship.<sup>26</sup>

Both Hinduism and Buddhism found their way into the various countries, and under the vigorous influence of their priests and the patronage of the new monarchs, they became well established. Finot says: 'India has laid her mark on all the great Far Eastern countries: some of them received from her a substantial part of their religious and artistic culture, and others are indebted to her or their very existence as civilised states.'<sup>27</sup> The Indian language, ideas, beliefs and customs followed in the wake of the colonists and rapidly permeated the entire region. There is abundant evidence to show that the process was complete. If ancient Gaul was more Romanised than Rome herself, it can be said of the lands in South-East Asia that they became more Indianised than India herself, but with this significant difference that in respect of the latter, the result was not the product of a deliberate policy organised by the home country. Commenting on the effects of this movement, Foucher has observed thus: 'What they implanted in these rich deltas or these fortunate islands was nothing less than

their civilization or at least its copy; here are their names and their laws, their alphabet and their learned language, here is the whole of their social and religious condition, with the closest possible likeness to their castes and their cults. In short, it is not a question of simple influence, but in all the force of the term, a veritable colonisation.<sup>8</sup> Kingdoms founded by Indians rose to great heights in the several countries of South-East Asia, the Sailendra Empire in Sumatra and Java, the kingdom of Kadiri in Eastern Java, the kingdom of Kambōjadēśa (Cambōđia) and the thirteen dynasties of Champā.

By far the most significant feature of contrast between the European and Indian colonisation was that the establishment of these Indian kingdoms was not followed by imperial control from the mother land. No official or political connection was maintained between the mother country and the new states. Thus it appears that the Indian expansion in the Far East was in its character similar to the Greek colonisation of the 8th and 7th centuries B.C., and was intrinsically different from the European imperialism of modern times. The connection between the mother country and the colony was religious and cultural, but not political.<sup>9</sup> P. N. Bose is not quite accurate when he says: 'Those (Indian) colonies were not bound by any bond, direct or indirect.' But he is doubtless correct when he adds: 'India never had a supreme Emperor who could extend his supremacy to the whole of India and control the migrations of the Indian people. ....Thus India established only a cultural empire outside India and nothing more.'<sup>10</sup> Therefore, if Indians speak of Greater India with pride it is only in the sense in which historians refer to Greater Hellas of old.

Nor did the new states arise or continue as alien powers depending on the power of the sword. These new kingdoms

must have emerged in one of two ways. Either a Hindu leader established himself as a chief over the local population already Indianised in a large measure through peaceful penetration and settlement, or an ambitious local chief adopted the imported culture as a means of strengthening his position. In any case, even where the ruling family was of pure Indian stock at the start, it could not have maintained its racial purity for long; mixed marriages, which the members of the royal family like the other colonists were obliged to contract by the force of circumstances, broke through racial barriers. For example, the Chinese annals ascribe the origin of the first dynasty of the kingdom of Funan, the predecessor of Kambūja in the valley of the Mekong, to a marriage of this type.<sup>11</sup>

In this connection it is interesting to compare the Indian relationship towards her colonies with that adopted by other Asiatic powers. Japan, a thoroughgoing imitator of Europe, gave up her old ideals of isolation and conservatism and became aggressively imperialist towards the close of the 19th century. The technique of expansion employed by her was notoriously selfish and oppressive. China, too, adopted from an early period a colonial policy which was aggressive and tyrannical. For instance, China annexed her early colonies in the Deltas of Tonkin and North Annan, and she employed brutal force in order to perpetuate her sway over them. In fact, military occupation of the conquered country and employment of officials for the specific purpose of spreading their civilisation in the colonised and conquered regions were typical Chinese methods. On the other hand, the Indian entry into the new lands was, as already observed, by means of peaceful penetration, and their policy subsequent to their settlement in the land of their adoption, too, was peaceful and friendly. Needless to add that it was totally different from the well-known features of European imperialism, which was characterised

by administrative arbitrariness, overcentralisation and excessive interference with individual freedom.

Apart from administrative methods, the manner in which the Europeans attempted to propagate their religion was a marked contrast with the Indian pattern of popularising their creeds. The Indian settlers in South-East Asia carried with them their religious beliefs, traditions and practices, and from the beginning there appeared an effortless conversion of the indigenous people to the new faiths. Moreover, there is evidence showing that in the wake of traders, a considerable number of Brāhmins and Buddhists proceeded to these countries. Priests and congregations are known to have flourished there; perhaps, they were invited from the homeland by the monarchs in the colonies. Epigraphs belonging to several of these countries in the Far East show that the kings received their instruction in early life from eminent religious Āchāryas. It is interesting to learn that there were many instances where sons of kings and members of the royal family became High Priests and Āchāryas. It seems that the intermarriage between the royal and priestly families was a matter of frequent occurrence. Numerous inscriptions in Kambūja-Dēśa reveal that there flourished in the land many 'Āśramās' which were monastic organisations, founded by royal munificence and private efforts. These Āśramās were quite large in number in Kambūja-Dēśa, and it is likely that similar organisations had spread throughout the new colonies. Wherever they existed, they served as strongholds or citadels of Hindu culture and civilisation in its progress of cultural conquest.<sup>12</sup>

An Indian, named Che by the Chinese, who lived in the 5th century A.D., and visited Tieu-Suen near Funan, gives the following account of the place: 'Tuen-sium is a vassal state

of Funan. The king is called Kuen-luen. It contains 500 Hu (probably a mercantile class) families of India, 200 Fotu (probably Buddhists) and more than a thousand Brāhmaṇas of India. The people of Tuensium follow their religion and give them their daughters in marriage, as most of these Brāhmaṇas settle in the country and do not go away.' Again, I-tsing, the Chinese pilgrim, testifies from personal knowledge to the political and commercial importance of Śrī Vijaya towards the close of the 7th century A.D., and to its fame as a centre of Buddhist learning. He observes : 'The Buddhist (Mahāyanist) priests number more than a thousand, whose minds are bent on learning and good practices. They investigate and study all the subjects that exist just as in the Middle Kingdom (India).'

Thus it is obvious that both the Hindu and Buddhist priestly classes played an important role in popularising and establishing the Indian religions in South-East Asia. But it is important to observe that neither the priests nor their patrons had any ulterior political motive; the dissemination of their sacred knowledge and the securing of more adherents to their faiths were their sole concern. Assuredly the same thing cannot be said of all the European missionaries. We have had instances of missionary societies reinforcing the nationalist theories, for example, the Barmen Rhine Mission which established ten or more mission stations in South-West Africa, engaged itself extensively in trade, and through its inspector, requested the protection of the German Governmet. German missions, which operated in the Pacific islands, too, were intimately associated with political objectives. It has been authoritatively stated that, in general, pious Germans at home were eager to have the 'Flag follow the Gospel.' Dr. Parker Thomas Moon, writing about the prodigious expansion of missionary effort in the 19th century, succinctly observes

thus : 'Going out to preach a kingdom, not of this world, missionaries found themselves very often builders of very earthly empires.'<sup>13</sup> Of Fabri, one of the powerful advocates of colonial expansion in Bismarck's time, who was an Inspector of a Missionary Society in South-West Africa, it has been said that probably he converted more Germans to imperialism than Africans to Christianity. While missionaries strove hard in the new lands, their organisations at home persistently urged upon their statesmen the need of extending Christianity over pagans. Often the cause of religion suffered on account of these profane objectives. 'Where merchant and murderous machine-gun followed the missionaries' trail', observes Dr. P. T. Moon, 'the message of Christianity was not always appreciated, not when Christian morals advanced by the gin and the venereal disease brought by trader and soldier. But the fact remains that missionary organisations were among the active groups which promoted imperialism.'<sup>14</sup>

The expansion of Hinduism and Buddhism in the Far East stands on a totally different footing. There was little of manoeuvring or backing from political force in the mother country. In fact, Indians transplanted to their land of adoption the religious ideas with which they were imbued at home. There was no doubt religious support from home. Exchanges of mission and of religious endowments occurred. From the numberless temples and monuments found in the Far East, the progress of the particular religions is clearly seen. There is little evidence of any hostility or rivalry among the different religions or among their sub-sects. In Champa, for example, Šaivism had the largest following, and the hold of the Vaishnavites and the Buddhists was comparatively poor. Nevertheless, there was no trace of any religious animosity, nor of any extraneous

influence on behalf of any particular belief. On the other hand, 'we have abundant traces of mutual goodwill and attempts at reconciliation between the different sects.'<sup>15</sup>

No consideration of Indian colonialism would be complete without a reference to the stupendous marvels of art which appeared as a result of Indian settlements in the Far East. As in India, so in the colonised countries, art was the handmaid of religion, and people lavished their skill as well as their resources on religious edifices and images of goddesses. Angkōr Vat, or The Temple of the City, in Cambōdia and the matchless temple of Bārābudūr in Jāvā are two magnificent productions of human skill. Indian art was imported not only into Cambōdia and Jāvā, but also into Siam, Champā as well as into various places in the Indian Archipelago. It may not be inappropriate here to recall an interesting piece of conversation which Dr. Majumdar, one of the prominent historians of Greater India, had with a Dutch gentleman. Dr. Majumdar writes: 'When I was in Jāvā a Dutch gentleman once casually remarked to me that they occupied the same position to-day as my ancestors did. I remarked with good humour, so as not to wound his feelings, that it was perfectly true, with only a slight difference, viz., that when they would leave Jāvā nothing but sugar and rubber plantations would keep alive for about a century the story of their mastery, but Bārābudūr and hundreds of other monuments will tell the tale of my forefathers for another thousand years.'<sup>16</sup>

In conclusion, the question may be asked what the causes are for the differences in the colonial policy of the Europeans and Indians. The materialistic outlook of the Westerners, contrasted with the spiritualistic temper of the Indians, is occasionally offered as an explanation; but, it is only a

partial explanation. No doubt, the conception of Dharma as well as faith in the evanescence of worldly existence, which have been stressed by both Hinduism and Buddhism alike, did operate as influences restraining worldly acquisition and the adoption of aggressive imperialism. But wars and conquests were not prohibited in the Hindu or Buddhistic world. The conceptions of Digvijaya (victory over extensive lands), Chakravarti (Universal Emperor) and Aśvamedha (horse sacrifice celebrating extensive conquests) were all based on the ambition of extending dominions. The Buddha and Aśoka were after all exceptions. Neither Arthaśāstra nor the Dharma śāstras have prescribed war. Nevertheless, it is undeniable, that the dominant outlook of the Hindu and the Buddhist has been either otherworldly or unwordly. Spiritual triumphs were valued higher than material acquisitions. Up to a certain extent, therefore, the difference in colonial policy is explained by the divergence in the European and Indian out-look on life.

But it would be a biased view to hold that the Indian, as contrasted with the European, was entirely altruistic in his out-look and that, consequently he undertook colonisation purely for conferring the blessing of culture and civilisation on the backward peoples. The average Indian was as much capable of selfishness and avarice as the Westerner. Spiritualism, or what passed for such, has not been found incompatible with personal ambition or even the development of a selfish acquisitive tendency.

The more fundamental reason, therefore, has to be sought elsewhere. The difference in the influence of the age and of the prevailing environment and the consequent divergence in economic and social condition seem to provide the most convincing explanation. At the time when India undertook

colonisation there did not exist any notable advance in industrial development which might have prompted a colonial policy of the European type. There was no question of over-population, of investment of surplus capital, of employment of cheap labour or of procuring a convenient market for the finished produce. Indians lived under a system of a simple agricultural and commercial economy. The temper of the age in India, roughly from the early centuries of the Christian Era down to the 13th century, A.D., was totally different from that of Europe in the 19th century, which was pre-eminently the age of machinery. Nor was there any acute rivalry between India and other countries in the race for the acquisition of industrial or commercial advantages. These circumstances may explain why Indian colonial ambition remained limited in scope, and why Indian colonialism escaped the blemishes which have tarnished the colonial policy of modern Europe.

## **N O T E S**

1. G. D. H. Cole, *The Intelligent Man's Guide to the Post - War World*, p. 875.
  2. *Ibid.*, p. 907.
  3. R. C. Majumdar, *Greater India*, p. 42.
  4. G. D. H. Cole, *The Intelligent Man's Guide to the Post-War World*, Section on 'U. N. O., Trusteeship and Colonial Policy'. p. 930.
  5. Parker Thomas Moon, *Imperialism and World Politics (1927)*, p. 31.
  6. 'History of Malaya'. p. 18.
  7. Louis Finot, 'Hindu Kingdoms in Indo-China'—*The Indian Historical Quarterly*, 1925, p. 599.
  8. *Art Greco-Bouddhique du Gandhara*, II. p. 618. Quoted by K. A. N. Sastri, *HISTORY OF SRI VIJAYA*, p. 7. See also C. Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Vol. I. pp. xii-xiii.
  9. R. C. Majumdar, *Kambūj Dēśa*, p. 139. He states: 'It is to be noted that the Indian colonisation in the Far East was not an imperialism in any form, political or economic.'
  10. P. N. Bose, *Hindu Colony of Cambōđia*, pp. 34-5.
  11. K. A. N. Sastri, *History of Sri Vijaya*, pp. 7-8. See also R. C. Majumdar, *Kambāja-Dēśa*, p. 108.
  12. R. C. Majumdar, *Kambūja-Dēśa*, pp. 108-12.
  13. Parker Thomas Moon, *Imperialism and World Politics*, p. 64.
  14. *Ibid.*, pp. 54-5.
  15. R. C. Majumdar, *Ancient Indian Colonies in the Far East*. vol. I, p. 169.
  16. R. C. Majumdar, *Greater India*, p. 44.
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### XIII. Were the Pallavas Brāhmins?

Generally the Pallavas are considered to have been of Brāhmin origin. Some of their early inscriptions state that they belonged to the Bhāradvāja gōtra of the Brāhmin caste.<sup>1</sup> K. P. Jayaswal is at great pains to show that the Pallavas, like the Vākāṭakas, were Brāhmins.<sup>2</sup> In fact he traces the origin of the Pallavas to the Vākāṭakas. But, excepting the circumstance that the Vākāṭakas and Pallavas claimed themselves to belong to the Bhāradvāja gōtra, there is nothing else to prove the origin of the Pallavas from the Vākāṭakas. It is pertinent to observe in this connection that the Śālaṅkāyanas also belonged to the Bhāradvāja clan.

How the Pallavas became military leaders and founders of a royal dynasty is explained by some that they were originally Brāhmins and that they subsequently became Kṣatriyas. It is held that since they adopted warfare as their occupation they came to be known as Brahma Kṣatriyas. This is said to be clear from the fact that the Pallavas traced their descent from Drōṇa, who was a Brāhmin, but who became a warrior. The Pañjankōil Plates show that though the Pallavas were Brāhmins, they took to warfare and consequently came to be called Brahma Kṣatriyas.<sup>3</sup> This is confirmed by the Kaśakuḍi Plates<sup>4</sup> and certain stone inscriptions.<sup>5</sup> In this context it may be mentioned that in the Pullūr Plates the Pallava genealogy commences not from Brahma or Viṣṇu but from Drōṇa.<sup>6</sup> Further, the Balipīṭha inscription of Rājasimha in the Shore Temple of Māhabalipuram refers to two Śiva temples, Rājasimha Pallavēśvaram and Kṣatriya Simha Pallavēśvaram. This shows that Kṣatriya

Simha was a name assumed by Rājasimha. (Ep. Col. 566 of 1912, Madras Ep. Rep. for 1913, paras 8 and 9).

On the contrary it is significant to observe that the earlier Plates like those of Mayidavōlu do not speak of the Pallavas as Brāhmins. In the Nedungarayu Plates of Prince Viṣṇugōpa it is stated in the opening line that the Pallavas attained Brāhminhood while they were Kṣatriyas.<sup>7</sup> This would suggest that they were originally Kṣatriyas and that they became elevated to the position of Brāhmins later. Pallava kings uniformly assumed the caste name Varman, which is used only by Kṣatriyas and never by Brāhmins. The *Agni Purāṇa* states that the Brāhmins, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śūdras had the caste names of Sarma, Varma, Gupta and Dāsa respectively.

It may be mentioned in this connection that Virakūrcha, the supposed founder of the Pallava dynasty is said to have been invested with the insignias of full sovereignty by his marriage with the Nāga princess, the daughter of the Nāga emperor.<sup>8</sup> Were Nāgas Brāhmins? They were not, and to the best of our knowledge, they assumed Kṣatriyahood later.

Thus it is probable that the Pallavas were originally Kṣatriyas and subsequently assumed Brāhminhood. That they were originally Kṣatriyas is clear from the well known harangue of Mayūraśarman, the Kadamba Brāhmaṇ king, when he was denied entrance to the ghaṭika at Kāñchi. The Tālagunda inscription recording the quarrel between Mayūraśarman and the Pallava horseman implies that the Pallavas were Kṣatriyas. As translated by Dr. Kielhorn,<sup>9</sup> the relevant portion of the inscription, would run thus: "There, enraged by a fierce quarrel with a Pallava horseman, he reflected: 'Alas, that in this Kali age the Brāhmins should be so much feebler than the Kṣatriyas!...For, if, to

one, who has duly served his preceptor's family and earnestly studied his branch of the Vēda, the perfection in holiness depends on a king, what can there be more painful than this?"...This passage suggests that Mayūraśarman, the Brāhmin, spoke of the Pallavas as Kṣatriyas. Surely he was not referring to the Pallava horseman as a Kṣatriya. The mention of 'king' makes it clear that the reference is to the Pallava monarch.

Having assumed Brāhminhood, like all new converts, the Pallavas became great supporters of Brāhmins and the traditional organisation of caste. For example, in speaking of Mahēndravarman II, the Kaśākudi Plates<sup>10</sup> state how Mahēndravarman adhered rigorously to the Varṇāśramadharma. The Pallava kings are known to have respected Brāhmins. Parameśvaravarman I, for instance, was an adorer of Brāhmins. Again, inscriptions like the Pullūr copper plates speak of gifts to 'Bappa Bhāttārakar.'<sup>11</sup> Bappa Bhāttārakar meant the great Brāhmins. The Chendalūr, Chūra and Udayēndiram Plates refer to the profound respect paid to the Bappa Bhāttārakar, the great Brāhmins.<sup>12</sup>

The Pallavas played a great part in spreading Āryan culture in the south. The Pallava kings were steeped in Sanskrit culture and learning. They imported Sanskrit and Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism of the North Indian model. They turned Kāñchi into another sacred Kāśi and under the Pallavas, the South became as sacred a Hindu land as the North. 'Bhārata Varṣa' which in the time of Khāravela was probably confined to the North only, was given a new definition to include the land up to Cape Comorin. The Pallavas were great patrons of the Ghaṭikas or centres of learning, where a scholarly study of the Vēdas was pursued.

An interesting theory<sup>13</sup> advanced by K. Shanmughasundaram is that the Vanniyakula Kṣatriyas were related to the Pallavas of old. But the evidence in support of the theory does not appear to be convincing.

## N O T E S

1. See for example, the inscription of Mañchikallu. *Epigraphia Indica* XXXII pp. 87-90.
2. K. P. Jayaswal, *History of India* (c. 150 A.D. to 350 A.D.), pp. 180-2. He states that the Vākāṭakas also, like the Pallavas belonged to the line of Drōṇā Āsvattāman, being Bhāradvājas.
3. p. 4. *Pallavar Cheppēḍugaḷ Muppadu* (The Tamil Varalāṅgu Kaṭagam).
4. Kaśākuḍi Plates, Ślōka 18, *S.I.I.* Vol. II, p. 346.
5. *South Indian Inscription*, Vol. 12, Inscription No. 48.
6. Pullūr Plates—Ślōka 18, p. 186, *Pallavar Cheppēḍugaḷ Muppadu*. (The Tamill Varalāṅgu Kaṭagam.)
7. Line 1, Page 305, *Pallavar Cheppēḍugaḷ Muppadu*, (The Tamil Varalāṅgu Kaṭagam.)
8. *S.I.I.* Vol. II, 508.
9. Reproduced on p. 195 of Dr. Minakshi's *Administration and Social Life under the Pallavas* (1938).
10. The Kas'ākuḍi Plates, Ślōka 23, P. 161, *Pallavar Cheppēḍugaḷ Muppadu*.
11. Excepting the Pañjankōvil and Hosakkōṭai Plates, all the old copper plates of the Pallavas speak of gifts to Brāhmīns.
12. The relevant passages :  
*Pallavar Cheppēḍugaḷ Muppadu*, the Tamil Va-ralāṅgu Kaṭagam.  
P. 325, line 12, Text Chendalūr grant.  
P. 313, line 14, Chūra grant, Sanskrit text of inscription.  
P. 352, line 9, Udayēndiram grant, Sanskrit text.
13. K. Shanmughasundaram :  
'Vanniyar Varalaṇu Pallavanādu Tōṭṭram' (Tamil), p. 4.

## XIV. Bhakti Cults in North and South India

Bhakti means devotion to God. Simple as it seems, it has been interpreted in different ways at various epochs of India's religious history. Pre-conceived notions, wishful thinking and conjectures have at times influenced the interpretation of Bhakti. Further, the indebtedness of the North to South India has been misrepresented.<sup>1</sup> Chronology, too, in respect of the earlier periods still bristles with difficulties. While these questions defy definite determination, an attempt is made here to assess the probabilities on the basis of the known facts.

In the early stage of man's history, bhakti or devotion, even implying adoration seems to have arisen out of fear or desire, influenced by personal considerations. Later, and even now, Bhakti has been often prompted by personal wish or traditional practices. The benefit motive is dominant, and in early times iconic worship itself might have arisen in pursuance of that feature.

Take for instance the case of the so-called Indus valley culture.<sup>2</sup> We find a number of clay sealings, figurines of terracotta and several stone images. The plenitude of the number of female figures of terracotta is conspicuous. The Mother Goddess seems to have held a prominent position. In all probability these were worshipped by the people. Such figurative representations were found not only in India, but also in various countries from Iran to the Aegean. The Egyptians worshipped the Sun and his personification.

Akhmation, the great Egyptian, said that "His (Sun's) bountiful rays are the life-giver and life-sustainer."<sup>3</sup> Obviously the people adored the Sun for their own benefit. There were other seals, probably imported from the Indus Valley. Certain objects and motifs indicate indirect communication between the Indus Valley and Egypt, from Sumer and Elam. For instance, "the device of a deity grasping a lion on either side is common in the three ancient civilizations - the Indus Valley, Sumer and Egypt."<sup>4</sup>

In the age of the Vēdic India and earlier, the Dasyus were worshippers of the Phallus which is believed to have represented Śiva. There is no evidence of rituals or sacrifices offered to the phallus. Is it likely that for the Phallus or symbol representing the Paśupati found in the Indus Valley invocations or pūjas were offered. A controversy has arisen in respect of the origin of the term 'Pūja.' Dr. Sunit Kumar Chatterjee stated that 'Pūja' is derived from the Dravidian word 'pū' which means flower and the 'cey' which means 'to do' or from the Dravidian word 'pūśu,' to smear, meaning the decorating of the image with sandal paste or vermillion, representing blood, smeared on the image. The validity of these derivations is not settled beyond dispute. However, it is incorrect to think as some writers like Kulkarni have done, that Bhaktism started in South India.<sup>5</sup>

The Rig Vēda has specific reference to the performance of sacrifices in order to gain favours. The principal Gods mentioned in the Rig Vēda are Varuṇa, the sky-god, Mitra conjoined with Varuṇa, the solar gods, Sūrya and Sāvitri, as well as Viṣhṇu, representing the morning sun, Rudra, probably the precursor of Śiva, Vāyu, the wind god and Parjanya the god of rain, Agni, the god of celestial fire and so on.

They were not worshipped as images but only as concepts, but they were adored with rituals and sacrifices, accompanied by mantras, uttered with devotion but often for obtaining benefits. For instance, the Rig Vēda contains a prayer to Rudra imploring him to accept the havis (oblation) and spare the lives and property of the worshippers and his relatives. This is possible because the sacrifices became complex and varied like the Rājasūya, Vājapēya and the Aśvamēdha in which the aim of securing certain benefits was conspicuous. Much erudition has been brought to bear on Mantra which is believed to be of help in promoting devotion. There is a view that even without the mental invocation the formal recitation of God's name itself has its efficacy.<sup>6</sup> However, bhakti prompted by the selfish motive existed even in early times. But later, the nature of Bhakti was at times motivated by enlightened selfishness. Prayers were not offered for material well-being, but for freedom from birth and death. Moreover, at times the devotion to God was concentrated for the sake of the welfare of all living creatures. It has been rightly said that unselfish devotion or *prēmam*, as it was called, was the high - water mark of *bhakti*.

At times such bhakti assumed a philosophic form. The tenth Book of the Rig Vēda presents the idea of the ultimate unity of God and even in this abstract and idealised form prayers are offered to him with intense devotion.

Now comes a controversy as to the next epoch in the evolution of *bhakti*. Was it first propounded by the Bhāgavatās or by the Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita? No doubt, the term *bhakti* appears in the Upanishads for the first time and it assumes a well-developed form in the Gīta.

But the Bhāgavatās seem to have been the first to preach the cult of unmotivated devotion to God. The Bhāgavatās were the earliest unselfish devotees of Vāsudēva-Krishṇa. The Bhāgavata is only one of the compilations which were handed down by word of mouth in the form of folk-songs, ballads and hymns.

Bhāgavata seems to have emerged earlier than the 4th century B.C., though it was embodied in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, several centuries later. Some hold that this most well-known of the Purāṇas was composed sometime between the 6th and 9th centuries A.D., while others assign it even to the 11th century A.D.<sup>7</sup>

However, the Bhāgavatism or Bhaktīsm as a cult which is believed to have been propounded by Vāsudēva, which in its turn, had incorporated the cult of Nārāyaṇa is traceable, as mentioned earlier, to about the 4th century B.C. It arose probably as a counterblast against the growing popularity of Buddhism. We have the earliest authentic reference to Bhāgavatism by Megasthenes. He speaks of the different cults associated with Vishṇu and Śiva to whom he accords the respective Greek names of Heracles and Dionysius.

Earlier, Pāṇini of 6th century B.C. mentions only Vāsudēva as the deity to be worshipped. Later, Śiva also was included though he seems to have been worshipped by the Indus Valley people even much earlier. The Vāsudēva Krishṇa cult is indirectly mentioned in the Chāndōgya Upanishad. This also suggests that Bhāgavatism appeared earlier. Further it must be noted that the Vāsudēva-Krishṇa cult was contemporaneous with the Jain Tīrthankar Arishtēni who lived much earlier than Mahāvira of 6th century B.C.

Therefore, it can be said that the Vāsudēva cult had appeared earlier than 6th century B.C.<sup>8</sup> Much later, probably about the 1st century A.D., Mahāyānism was influenced by the Bhakti movement of the Hindus.

This leads us to the consideration of the interminable controversy over the chronology of the Vēdic literature. Extremists once believed that the Rig Vēda is as old as 8000 B.C. But the discovery of the Bhōgaz-kōi inscription on the one hand and the date of the rise of Buddhism on the other, leads one to conclude that the Rig Vēda took shape some time about 1500 B.C. It would seem that after the Vēdas and Brāhmaṇas there must have appeared Bhāgavatism, following which came the Āraṇyakas, Upanishads and the Gīta.<sup>9</sup>

As seen earlier, Bhāgavatism is referred to in the Chāndōgya Upanishad and that confirms the chronological sequence mentioned above.

The idea of Nārāyaṇa attains prominence in the Upanishads and becomes still more clearly identified with Vishṇu in due course. Gīta, which appears in the Mahābhārata contains the essence of the Upanishads. In the Gīta Vishṇu assumes the form of Krishṇa. Was he a Dravidian or Āryo-Dravidian God? Some have suggested that he was a Dravidian deity as he was represented as sky blue in colour. But then Rāma and Vishṇu too have been shown in that colour. No dogmatism is justifiable on this matter though it has been attempted by many scholars.<sup>10</sup> Many swear that in the Rig Vēda itself Vishṇu is represented as the morning sun. But is it acceptable? Is it a case of interpolation?

The Bhakti cult had reappeared in the Upanishads and it was developed by the Gīta. The essence of the teaching

of the Gīta is unselfish love. Emphasis was laid on self-surrender and spiritual discipline as necessary elements of devotion to God. The view of D.C. Sircar that the Bhagavad Gīta must have arisen about the 3rd century B.C. fits into our scheme of chronology, though some scholars disagree with Sircar's View.

Did Śaivism develop a cult of bhakti as early as the age of the Bhāgavatas? Śaivism is said to have been earlier than the Vēdic age and that it is traceable to the Indus civilisation. But an organised cult of bhakti towards Śiva does not seem to have arisen early, though Patañjali of the 2nd century B.C. speaks of the Śiva-bhāgavatas or devotees of Śiva. Perhaps this devotion to Śiva developed under the Sungas, and later under the Guptas. Though we hear of the distinctive features of Kashmir Śaivism, Vīraśaivism in the Kannada region and so on, they are different from the Bhāgavata or Bhakti cults of North India of early days. In fact the Bhakti movement in respect of Śaivism had its glorious development in South India from about the 7th century though even here the Vaishṇava cult of bhakti seems to have appeared earlier.

*The Bhakti movements in Tamil Nādu:* In Tamil Nādu leaving aside for the moment other parts of India, Bhaktism in Vaishṇavism seems to have had an early start, as stated above. There appeared the Krishṇa cult and perhaps Madura of the South traced its name to Mathura where the Krishṇa cult had its great development. It has been suggested, though not proved, that the Southern Madurai became the centre of the Southern Krishṇa cult. The Yādavas had come to the south and had perhaps developed the worship of Krishṇa. Even earlier, a section of the Vṛṣṇi people seems to have colonised the Pāṇḍya country.

However, one thing is certain. The Vaishnava Alvvārs or devotees had an early origin; the ‘Mudal Alvvārs’, as they are called, are assignable to the 5th century A.D. and they were followed by a number of Vaishnava devotees till about the 9th century A.D. The influence of the Bhāgavatas was found among the Alvvārs. The Alvvārs were twelve in number. Doubtless the most prominent among them was Nammālvār.

The Alvvārs worshipped Vishnu, Nārāyaṇa and Krishṇa with intense emotion and their outpourings invoke unstinted devotion to this God. It is not necessary to enumerate the names of all the Alvvārs here. But the most important of them were Tirumāngai, Periyālvār and his adopted daughter Āṇḍāl and above all Nammālvār. Tirumāngai was a Maṭava by caste and, true to the traditions of his caste had taken to highway robbery in his early days. Later he became an ardent devotee of Vaishnavism and sang many moving songs on Vishnu, but some of his songs were primarily directed against Jainism and Buddhism.

Periyālvār of the extreme south had sung touching songs on Lord Krishṇa, particularly on his birth and early childhood. He also won fame as a successful disputant. Āṇḍāl is famous for her boundless devotion to God. Considering herself as a *Gopi* she imagined that she was a lover of Śrī Raṅganātha of Śrīraṅgam temple. She sang some enchanting songs on her love for the Lord. Her emotional songs are repeated on occasions of Vaishnavite marriages. The next important Alvvār was Nammālvār or Saṭakōpa whose *Tiruvōymoḷi* forms the last and most important part of the *Nālāyira Prabandham*. Nammālvār was a deeply learned devotee and his compositions are greatly respected. One of the Alvvārs, Kulasēkhara belonged to the West coast and

was a king of Vēnād in Kerala. His *Mukundamāla* quotes a verse from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa; this shows that this Purāṇa must have been composed in or before the 9th century A. D.

On the whole, the Ālvārs were early leaders of Tamilian Vaishṇavism representing the early Bhāgavatism. At their hands there was a marked fusion of Tamil with Sanskrit. Though the Ālvārs did not actively preach against the caste system, they disregarded caste distinctions; in fact Tiruppāṇ Ālvār belonged to the Pāṇa caste. South Indian Vaishṇavism has always depended for its strength on the support of the masses. There is a tradition that Tirumāṅgai was a contemporary of the Pallava king Narasimhavarman (A.D. 630-68) and if this is true, since Tirumāṅgai belonged to the 7th century, it can be concluded that the period of the Ālvārs ranged from the 5th to the 9th century. The Ālvārs were followed by Āchāryas who developed the philosophical aspect of the religion. The foremost among them was Rāmānujāchāriar, whose influence reached North India.

### *Śaivism*

About the same time in Tamil Nādu there was the great stir of the Bhakti movement among the Śaivites. In respect of India as a whole, some think that Vaishṇavism was earlier because Vishṇu as such figures in the Rig Vēda and some think that Vishṇu appeared after Bhāgavatism arose. But as noticed earlier Śiva was known even in the epoch of the Indus Valley civilisation. Some time later there came about a fusion and the Vēdic Rudra became identified with the non-Āryan Śiva. By the time of the Svētēśvatara Upanishad Śiva was absorbed in the Vēdic pantheon and was given a lofty position as Mahādēva. The earliest specific mention of Śiva

by a foreigner is traceable to Megasthenes. In the age of the Guptas the worship of Śiva assumed a considerable importance; but a Bhakti movement of Śaivism is only traceable to South India. Perhaps it commenced in the Kannada country, but it reached a great height in Tamil Nādu. Sixty three Nāyanmārs or devotees are said to have composed emotional songs employed for the adoration of Śiva. They went about the country visiting the Śaiva temples and adored Śiva with their' ecstatic devotion, collected later as the Dēvārams. It was the great epoch of Śaiva bhakti movement which can be said to have ranged from the 7th century A.D. to 9th century A.D. These songs are sung in Śaiva temples even to this day and therefore the Bhakti movement initiated by the Nāyanmārs or Śaiva saints had a long influence on the Tamils. The Nāyanmārs were bitter towards Jainism and Buddhism and that made their activities vigorous and entralling.

Among the Śaiva Nāyanmārs the most prominent were Jñānasambandhar, Tirunāvukkaraśar and Sundarar. Sambandar set his songs to music of a high order. Tirujñāna Sambandhar's famous Dēvārams are not only noted for their devotion but also for their contribution to music. Tirunāvukkaraśar known as Appar, is stated to have been originally a Jain and was converted to Hinduism through the efforts of his sister. Sundarar was the last of the three hymnists. He loved Śiva as a friend. He sang the Tiruttōṇdattogai containing an account of 62 saints. He was himself the 63rd saint, according to Nambi Āndār Nambi. But there appeared perhaps a little later, the still more famous Māṇikkavāchagar whose outpourings are collected in the Tiruvāchagam. They are soul-stirring songs and there is a common saying that he who is not moved by Tiruvāchagam will not be moved by any song. His date is the subject of controversy. But

in the light of the evidence from the Sinhalese source, Nikaya Sangrahava,<sup>11</sup> and the Pāṇḍyan epigraphs of the 9th century A.D., Māṇikkavāchagar, a contemporary of Varaguṇa I, may be assigned to the first half of the 9th century A.D.

Śaiva Siddhānta of Meykandār, a very popular work on Tamil Śaivism, though philosophical, inculcated true devotion to Śiva. It came subsequent to the Bhakti movement.

*The “new Bhakti cult” of South India:* Later there were undoubtedly many Tamil saints of great devotion and literary skill, like Arunagirinātha, Tāyumānavar and Rama-lingasvāmiga]. But though they are famous for their devotional poetry, they appeared at various stages in the history of Tamil Nādu and though they were influenced by the early Nāyanmārs, they did not belong to the wave of the Bhakti movement of Śaivism from the 7th to 9th century A.D.

The distinctive features of the Śaiva Bhakti movement of the South were that they were imbued by deeply emotional fervour and use of simple language understood by the common people. Unlike the leaders of the Bhakti movement of North India in the medieval period, they did not preach against idolatry and caste, though they disregarded caste distinctions.

*The Bhakti cult in North India:* Certain features of the Bhakti movement in North India from about the 12th century A.D. are different from those in Tamil Nādu both in respect of Vaishṇavism and Śaivism of the earlier epoch. In the first place, the leading reformers in the North rejected image worship, rituals and other ceremonies and positively opposed the caste system..

Secondly, they had to contend with Islam; but they did not oppose it. They tried to harmonise the two religions, Hinduism and Islam. Various forms of this conciliation and combination could be seen from the teachings of Kabīr and Nānak.

Thirdly, it is erroneous to think that the North Indian Bhakti movement owed its origin to South India as has been suggested by some, who hold that, Rāmānanda a follower of the Visiṣṭādvaita of Rāmānuja, was the precursor of North Indian bhakti cult in medieval times. This is not quite accurate. It is admitted that Rāmānanda was a follower of the creed preached by Rāmānuja. But it is wrong to think that Rāmānanda was a South Indian and that he was born in Mysore. In reality he was a native of Allahabad. But his advocacy of the Viśiṣṭādvaita certainly became popular in the North. Moreover, even before Rāmānanda there were in Mahārāshṭra medieval saints who forestalled him. Nor did the teachings of the Āchāryās of the South alone constitute a neo-bhakti cult as K. A. N. Sastri thinks.

Among the medieval saints in Mahārāshṭra prior to Rāmānanda there were persons of different castes. In fact, they created a mass revolution in their utter disregard of caste. In Mahārāshṭra too there appeared saints belonging to different castes. For instance, there was Nāmdēva, a tailor (1270-1350) who was a robber-chief in early life. He became an ardent devotee of Vithōba, God of Pandharpūr, but later considered Vithōba as no more than a symbol of the supreme soul that pervades the Universe. He was opposed to idol worship and he condemned fasts, pilgrimages, sacrificial ceremonies and all external observances.

Rāmānanda was a disciple of Rāghavānanda who belonged to Rāmānuja's creed of Visiṣṭādvaita. Rāmānanda stressed

the unity of God and the eradication of the various differences. Though a brāhmaṇ, he condemned caste. On his study of the Sāstras he proved that the observance of caste discriminations was unnecessary. While the southern leaders of the Bhakti movement merely disregarded caste differences Rāmānanda and his followers positively condemned caste. In fact, his twelve disciples included a Jat, a barber, cobbler and a Muslim, Kabīr. Their devotion to God was devoid of rites and ceremonies. He was thus the harbinger of a rational and coordinated form of religion, though his devotion to Rāma was conspicuous, and it appealed to the masses in all parts of Northern India. He was in a sense responsible for the revival of the devotion of the Bhāgavatās ; only he replaced Krishṇa and Rādhā by Rāma and Sītā.

Kabīr of the 15th century was the greatest follower of Rāmānanda. He tried to harmonise Hinduism with Islam. He thought that Rāma was not different from Rahim of the Muslims. His emphasis was pre-eminently on strict moral conduct. Besides condemning the caste system, idol worship, sanctity of baths in sacred rivers and other formalities, he disapproved the orthodox Muslim practices like adherence to Mosques, performance of Sunnat, and the practices like Namāz and Roza. In fact, his creed resembled that of the Sufis, for like them he laid stress on ardent love towards the supreme God. In his propagation of sincere love regardless of formalities and in his stress on religious tolerance, Kabīr may be said to have worked towards universal religion. The view that Kabīr was influenced by the Upanishadic non-dualism and Islamic monism coloured by Sufi concepts does not seem to be an exaggeration. Even traces of Buddhist thought are traceable in his Kabīrpanth. He was not dogmatic at all. He condemned narrow creeds and sectarianism.

There were other saints of North India in the medieval period, like Vallabha (1479-1531) who though born in Andhra Pradesh went to the north and lived in Benares. A scholar and a devotee, he stressed on the value of detachment from worldly pleasures. He preached devotion to Krishna and urged unconventional love condemning carnal pleasures to appeal to God.

More famous was Chaitanya, a Vaishnava brāhmin of Bengal and a contemporary of Vallabha. A social reformer like Rāmānanda, Kabīr, Nānak and Tukārām, Chaitanya was strongly opposed to caste distinctions and ceremonials of the Hindus. But he did not condemn idol worship or pilgrimages.

It is significant to note that Jīva Gōsvāmin, a follower of Chaitanya, wrote a work on the cult of *bhakti* and it is found that the influence of the Bhāgavata is unmistakably seen in it.

Nānak (1469-1538), the last of the famous medieval leaders of the Bhakti movement, eventually became the founder of Sikhism which harmonised Hinduism with Islam. The Ādi Granth, the Bible of the Sikhs, contains the hymns of Kabīr and Nanak. He had no faith in the caste system or in bathing in sacred rivers. Sikhism and Sufism resembled each other closely.

He was a strong advocate of monotheism. According to him God does not belong to any particular people, Muslim or Hindu. Rightly it has been said that Kabīr was the spiritual ancestor of Nānak. He urged that the only way of worshipping God is to sing His praises and to meditate on His name.

He laid stress also on practical morality. Nobility of character was emphasised. Sincerity and honesty were given a lofty place. He said: ‘Abide pure amidst the impurities of the world; thus shalt thou find the way to religion.’

*Sufism*: From the side of Muslims there were certain leaders besides Kabīr who advocated a happy compromise between Hinduism and Islam. Shaik Salim Chishtī and Dāra Shukoh were the leadin gmembers of this school, known as Sufism.

There were some features in common between Vaishnāvism and Sufism. In the medieval period both these religions stress the need for self-realisation outside the limitations imposed by rigid dogma. The Islamic concept of equality and brotherhood of man greatly attracted the lower classes of the Hindus who had no access to the temples and the right to read the scriptures. Many of the Muslim mystics, particularly Chishtī and his followers, showed a spirit of toleration towards other religions and creeds. They emphasized the essential unity between different religions and that constitutes the kernel of Sufism.

Originally the Sufis were interested in converting Hindus to Islam. But later on many Sufis gave up their evangelistic zeal and instead devoted themselves to a comparative study of the religions and philosophies of India. Abul Fazl and Dāra were foremost among them. The intolerant policy of Aūraṅgāzēb drove many Sufis to a conspicuous admiration for the Vēdānta philosophy and the influence of the Bhakti movement on them was conspicuous. Some Sufis, however, even adopted idolatry as another way of worshipping God. Though there were different shades of Sufism, they were all considerably influenced by certain sections of the Bhakti

movement. It has been rightly said that "Guru Nānak's thought, in no way differed from that of the Sufis."<sup>12</sup> What would have happened if Sufism had a continuous history of progress?

An important question is whether the Bhakti cult in Northern India is traceable to South India and can be claimed to be a continuation of the neo-bhakti cult of South India by Rāmānuja, Nimbaraka and Madhva.<sup>13</sup> This does not appear to be warranted. The differences of the Bhakti movement in North India with those of the teachings of the Āchāryas have to be clearly borne in mind though a few ideas may have travelled from here. The generalisation made is not justified.

## NOTES

1. Chidambara Kulkarni states in page 139 of his *Ancient Indian History and Culture*, that 'the Bhakti schools originated in the South.' But he does not substantiate his view. A chronological anamoly and undependable statement is recorded by Kashitimohan Sen in page 378 of '*The Cultural Heritage of India, Vol. IV.*' that 'There is a popular verse....."Bhakti arose first in the Drāviḍa land; Rāmānanda brought it to the North; and Kabir spread it to the seven continents and nine divisions of the world.'" This is obviously a wrong statement based on a piece of guess.
2. Recent discoveries show that this civilisation was not confined to the Indus Valley, but had spread over various regions of Northern and Western India.
3. It is interesting that the Bhagavad Gīta also speaks of the Sun worship.
4. A. D. Pusalker : *The Cultural Heritage of India, Vol. I*, p. 155
5. See Note I above. K. A. N. Sastri's statement (*The Culture and Heritage of the Tamils*, p. 108) that 'the saints of the Tamil land evolved new types of bhakti which found its expression in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa' has added to the confusion.
6. See Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute : Diamond Jubilee Volume, p. 829 and ibid, p. 1941.
7. Some historians like R. C. Majumdar and K. A. N. Sastri think that the Bhāgavata Purāṇa was composed in South India. The basis for this view has not been indicated, and it is open to doubt. Sastri however states that it contained the tenets of the neo-bhakti cult combined with the doctrines of Advaita. This is not accepted by specialist authorities on Vaishṇavism.
8. The view of some that the cult of Bhakti owed its rise to Christianity or Islam is obviously unsustainable.
9. Conservative scholars of the Vedic age may not agree with this, primarily on account of well-established traditions.

10. The *Harivamśa* and *Purāṇas* refer to the cowherd boy, Gopala-Krishṇa, the son of Vāsudeva and Dēvaki. But else-where he is described as a kṣatriya king and a householder. However, in early Tamil works Krishṇa is described as Kāri-Kaṇṇan or as dark-complexioned Kaṇṇan (Krishṇa). This refers to black colour and is different from that of Vishṇu. Can Vishṇu's association with cows as indicated by the epithet *gōpa*, meaning herdsman found in the *Rig Vēda* (1. 22. 18) be responsible for the sky-blue colour? This is not convincing. Some Avatārs of Vishṇu alone are of the sky-blue colour. The suggestion that the blue colour of Vishṇu is ascribable to the Matsyāvatāra seems to be valid. The fact that five Viṣṇi heroes were apotheosized and worshipped with the title 'bhagavat' in the Mathura region probably by people associated with the old Yādava Sātvata Viṣṇi clan is also worthy of consideration in this context. Only suggestions can be offered in the sphere where an indubitable answer cannot be given. In the Śaṅgam works Tirumāl is said to be blue in colour like the water of the ocean or the blue diamond. It is interesting to find that in some of the Śaṅgam works in Tamil, Māl (Vishṇu) is stated to be blue in colour; his body is said to shine like the blue diamond (*Purāṇanūru*: 56: 5) or the water of the deep ocean. (Perumbāṇār-gu-ppaṭai 29-31).
11. 'Nikaya Sangrahava', the Sinhalese Chronicle, p. 18 and C. S. Navaratnam 'Tamils and Ceylon', p. 95.
12. N. M. Bhutani: The Cultural Heritage of India, Vol. IV, p. 610.
13. See K. A. N. Sastri: History of India II, p. 76. A similar sweeping statement is made by S. N. Ganesan: "Due to the influence of Rāmānuja, Rāmānanda, Nimbāraka, Vallabha and Madhva, the whole of North India saw a widespread devotional movement with different ideas about the ways and means of attaining realisation." Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures, Madras, 1975, Jan. to June, p. 76. No one doubts the influence of some ideas of Rāmānuja in the north. But this Āchārya's ideas were not identical with those of the Ālvārs of the original Bhakti movement of the South.

# XV. The Caste System in Tamil Nādu

## SECTION I

Caste is an emotionally loaded theme. Therefore, in handling the subject, care has to be taken to avoid wounding the sentiments of people of the different castes. That does not mean, however, that the plain truth as one sees it should be suppressed or camouflaged. Courage of conviction is an imperative necessity. I am sure that my ideas on the caste system in Tamil Nādu will not be pleasing either to the Brāhmins, caste Hindu non-Brāhmins or the Depressed Classes. But that apprehension does not deter me from speaking out the truth as I see it.

The word ‘caste’ comes from the Portuguese word ‘casta’ signifying breed, race or kind. The first use of the word ‘caste’ occurs in 1563 in the writing of Garcia de Orta. The word ‘caste’ was used by the French who spoke of ‘caste’ meaning breed. It is not known whether the Portuguese or the French used it originally in this sense; the probability is that the Portuguese were the first to coin the word.

The word ‘jāti’ or caste used in India specifies a subdivision of the larger division, ‘Varṇa.’ Varṇa is believed to have been based on colour or race. In post-Vedic times in north India the four-fold division seems to have appeared.<sup>1</sup>

The Varṇa concept was supposed to be based on the colour of the skin of a race and as a corollary of that belief emerged the theory that Varṇas arose as a result of conquest of one race by another. But colour could not have been the fool-proof index of a race. Could it be thought that the Dāsas, who perhaps became the ancestors of the Śūdras, were alone dark, while the Brāhmin, Kṣatrian and Vaiśya gradually developing into the priests, warriors and common men, were all fair in complexion?

Over the ages, subsequent to the epoch of the Brāhmaṇas there appeared the castes or subdivision of the Varnas. It is well known that while there were four Varnas there have been well over three thousand castes or jatis. A jati is partly occupational and partly a sociological sub-division within each Varna.

The traditional association between caste and occupation, however, is far from dissolution. Though some mutations were possible, the traditional basis held ground for the most part. In recent times the extension of endogamy among the subdivisions of castes has tended to reduce the rigour of the caste; but it has influenced only a very small section of the Hindu population. It is notable that even a change of religion does not destroy the caste system; for among converts too, the older caste distinctions persist, perhaps in a milder form.

Europeans studying the Indian caste are sometimes tempted to identify it with class. But the two are different. Caste is based on birth, conferring social status, while class is primarily a question of economic status. In a class society, status is determined by vocation and consequent income. It has been rightly said that caste and class are two parallel and overlapping systems of status-grading in society. Sometimes the class and caste characteristics are parallel; at others they cut across each other.<sup>2</sup>

But though the Indian caste system has developed certain distinctive features, there have been more or less similar social divisions in other countries. Analogous institutions have flourished in certain other countries of the world. In ancient Egypt there had existed a social division in which different groups adopted special features resembling those of the Indian caste system. But there was one vital difference. Intermarriage among the various groups was not prohibited. Further, in Egypt, all castes and professions were held in the same

esteem.<sup>3</sup> Moses, the celebrated law giver of the Jews, divided the people into groups resembling castes.

In respect of functional allotment to specific groups of people, the ordinances of the Theodosian Code of the Western Roman Empire in the 5th century A.D. can be cited as providing a parallel instance to the Hindu system.<sup>4</sup> But the most striking parallel to the Hindu varṇas may be found in the early social organization of Japan which recognized four categories of people, viz. (1) the court nobles who claimed descent from deities or emperors (2) the military class (3) the Heimin or common people who were divided into cultivators, artisans and traders and (4) a pariah class, engaged in despised occupations such as leather-work, which lived in separate villages and could neither intermarry nor eat with the higher classes.<sup>5</sup> In respect of the earlier social organization of Japan there were some striking similarities with the Indian caste system. Analogous to the Chandālas of India, there were the eta of Japan. But intermarriage was prohibited only with the lowest class; it was common among the rest; to that extent it was different from the usages of the Indian caste system. The hereditary caste system with the rigidly endogamous subgroups was the distinctive feature of the Indian pattern.<sup>6</sup>

In Burma, a social organization similar in some respects to the Indian caste system existed. In Burma, under the old rule of the Burmese monarchy, seven distinct classes of outcastes were recognised. The Burmese word for one of them is *sandāla*, which resembles the Chandāla of India. It may be noted that there are certain cases in Africa in which taboos associated with occupations have operated to prevent not merely intermarriage but any sexual relationship at all between pastoral and cultivating groups. Thus some elements of the Indian custom have been prevalent among several people in the world.

## SECTION II

### ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CASTE SYSTEM IN INDIA

The Indian caste system has been studied intensively by sociologists, anthropologists and historians, both Indian and European.<sup>7</sup> But it is by no means easy to assess its origin, its traditional features, its merits and drawbacks. Indian writers have frequently yielded to the temptation of assigning it a religion-oriented background, while certain European savants have viewed it with some deep-seated prejudice. Many of the Western writers have failed to understand the inner meaning and significance of some Hindu social practices and traditional customs. Several Europeans approached the study of this hoary system with a prejudice that it is one of those social evils which the religious-minded Hindus had developed without proper reason.

Several theories have been advanced in explanation of the origin of the caste system. One of the vague and general hypotheses is that caste is nothing but the outcome of the herd instinct coupled with a natural division of labour. But those features exist among all people, and therefore they do not afford a specific explanation of the origin of the caste system.

Some think that the Hindu caste system emerged out of totemism.<sup>8</sup> Caste is maintained by two prohibitions, one on interdining and the other on intermarriage. If one can trace the history and development of restriction in these two respects, both the origin and the development of caste will be revealed. These two inhibitions were found among certain early totemic groups.

For example, prohibition of interdining is found among some aborigines. An aboriginal tribe called *Kharias* in parts of Bihar and Orissa has a custom of the married daughter not being allowed to enter their own mother's kitchen. Its origin may be traced to the 'Totem' taboo. The aborigines cherish and worship their respective totem. They are not allowed to eat with the people of their respective totem. But this taboo as well as that of intermarriage among certain tribes does not seem to be a convincing explanation of the complicated caste system.

Adoption of particular occupations was apparently the basis of caste. The Sāntals were originally casteless; but the rise of sub-sects under different professions or callings shows the initial stage formation in the casteless society of the Sāntals. Like the Sāntals, the Muṇḍas, now found in certain parts of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, created Varṇa divisions on the basis of calling or profession. It is significant that in the original habitat of the Muṇḍas the caste ramification is greater than elsewhere, if it is to be judged by the largest number of the depressed classes that are found there. It is suggested that the Muṇḍas were the prime movers in creating the 'Varṇas,' and their Brāhmaṇ descendants were those who created and fanned the flame of caste differences.<sup>9</sup> But is it probable that the culturally advanced Aryans or Dravidians would have modelled their caste system on the practices of the aborigines like the Santals and Muṇḍas? No.

An orthodox view held regarding the origin of the caste system is that which traces it to the so-called Purushasūkta hymn. This hymn has been interpreted and explained by several thinkers, but its classical exposition is found in the great Manusmṛiti of Manu, the law-giver.<sup>10</sup> According to the Purushasūkta hymn it is believed that the Brāhmaṇins

arose from the mouth of the Purusha (Brahmā), the Kshatriya from both his arms, the Vaiśya from his thighs and the Śūdra from his feet. Manu, however, in his interpretation, held that the Brāhmaṇa was born from the face of the Purusha. Manu associates caste with Brahman, while the Vishṇu Purāṇa holds the Purusha as identical with Vishṇu.

On the basis of internal evidence Max Müller and several others hold that the Purushasukta hymn is an interpolation into the Vēdic text.<sup>11</sup> It is not improbable that Manu himself was the author of this interpolation. However, Manu exploits the Purushasukta hymn to exalt the position of the higher castes. It is significant to remember that in the Vēdic days the position of the Śūdras was not much lower than that of the Brāhmaṇins. Gradually there was a growing deterioration of the position of the Śūdras. It is said that in the Rig Vēdic period the Brāhmaṇins performed White Magic while the Śūdras performed Black Magic. Gradually the Śūdras declined to adopt the baptism of the sacred thread. From that began the deterioration of the Śūdras. The Brāhmaṇins adopted exclusiveness towards the Śūdras first and in due course to those of the other Varnas.

The European scholars generally held that the caste system was a product of the Āryan invasion, which led to the suppression of the Dasyus or the native population. But the fact of the Āryan invasion itself is now being questioned. Certain elements of similarity between the religion of the Persians and Āryans may well be explained from the Āryan ideas having travelled to Iran from India. Nor were the Dravidians identical with the Dasyus, the earlier inhabitants.

The Dasyus or Śūdras themselves were not a despicable people in the Rig Vēdic age. In fact, the evidence is that the Śūdras occupied a respectable position. The only difference between the Brāhmins and the Śūdras was a question of religious practice. If the Śūdras were prepared to accept the Brāhmaṇa baptism with the Gāyatṛi and the sacred thread they could have become even the highest among the Brāhmins. The sons of Dirghatamas through a Śūdra servant woman became a celebrated Rishi, established Rishikulas and made hymns for the Rig Vēda. Again, the Rishi Kavasha and Vatsa were born of Śūdra mothers who were servants. Vyāsa, the author of the Mahābhārata, was the son of a fisherwoman. In the Vēdic age the caste system was very flexible. The difference then between the Brahmin and the Śūdra lay in the Vēdic period only in religious observance. Consequently a Śūdra was not allowed at the Vēdic sacrifices. Religious differences played an important role in the development of caste, as Jolly, Winternitz and Fick have pointed out.

The deterioration of the position of the Śūdras and the stiffening of the caste system appeared during the age of the Brāhmaṇas which are commentaries on the hymns in the Vēdas. The determination of the date of the Brāhmaṇas is by no means easy. There are varying views ranging from 9th century B.C. to 4th century B.C. It is notable that a low position was accorded to women similar to that of the Śūdras. This is notable from the later Vēdic period, as may be seen from the *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa*, *Paraskara Grhyasūtra* and the *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra*. It is learnt that women and sūdras were held in contempt by several authors of the Dharmaśāstras and Purāṇas also. In the law-books like those of Manu and Yājnavalkya women and sūdras are described as lifelong slaves from birth to death.

The idea of superiority among castes may be said to have appeared with Kautilya of the 3rd century B.C., who prescribed different duties for the people of different castes. The superiority complex among the higher castes was developed later. Even in the time of Kautilya the degradation of the Śūdras was not marked, though the Śūdras were regarded as workers and producers.

It should not be thought that in early times the Śūdras were only manual labourers without any education. In fact in the early period there was no branch of study from which the Śūdras were excluded. It is significant that the Śūdras were not debarred from the study of the Vēdas. Even according to Manu who appears to have flourished about the 2nd century A.D., the Vēdas could be learnt by any one from a competent Śūdra and that a lesson of the highest virtue could be learnt even from a Chandāla. Manu held that every one is born a Śūdra; action alone makes one a dvija and knowledge of Brahmā makes one a Brāhmaṇa. According to both Manu and Bhrigu the division into Brāhmaṇa, Kshatriya, Vaiśya and Śūdras are not based on birth but on action guided by his inclination.

It must be remembered that in early times nobody appears to have adhered to the Varnāshrama Dharma or caste duties. The Arthaśāstra, which to the best of our knowledge, lays down for the first time the functions of the different Varnas, states also that the Brāhmins and Śūdras were as keen fighters as the Kshatriyas and Vaiśyas.

From the Jātaka stories it is seen that the Brāhmins lived even as farm hands, hunters and trappers of wild animals, while some Śūdras were kings, chiefs and army commanders. Obviously therefore, it is clear that all the

Śūdras were not relegated to the menial service, as Manu makes it to be understood. The text of the Manusmṛiti, however, does indicate that some Śūdras were occupying high positions. The geographical horizon of the Manusmṛiti was confined to the region north of the Vindhya. But in the course of time the canons of Manu had their influence in the south too, and by that time the Śūdras were accorded a low position. The main duty of the Śūdras in the post-Manu period was to serve the Brāhmaṇas, Kshatriyas and Vaiśyas. They were required to remove dirt, filth and carcasses. Manu had ordained that the Śūdras must be reduced to slavery either by purchase or otherwise, because they are created by God for the sake of serving others. (Mānavadharmaśāstra VIII. 413)

In the Vēdic period, there was no difficulty for any one to become a Brāhmin provided one was prepared to go through the dvija baptism. In the post-Vēdic period even some eminent teachers of the Upanishad remained as Śūdras, for to be a Brāhmin was no *sine qua non* for respectability,

In the Rig Vēdic days the Brahmin would appear to have been a minor attendant at the Vēdic sacrifices. It is notable that Brāhmīns are mentioned only in a few places in the Rig Vēda; they had to sing hymns.

When the number of hymns that were to be sung alone increased, the Brāhmīns had to devote a considerable time in committing them to memory. First, the fathers sat with their sons and taught them how to chant the hymns. Then competent teachers among them may have been selected to teach groups of Brāhmin boys. This appears to have been the beginning of the Guru-kula; probably it served

as the basis for the division of labour of later days. The privileged position of the Brāhmin must have appeared about the Mauryan period.

The ascendancy of the Brāhmin prestige from the time of Kauṭilya may be seen from the following ideas contained in the Arthaśāstra. (1) If any one of a lower caste abuses the habits of a higher caste, the fine shall increase from three 'paṇas' upward (commencing from the lowest caste); (2) That the limb of a Śūdra with which he strikes a Brāhmin shall be cut off.

A still further deterioration of the position of the Śūdras appeared with Manu. By his time the position of the Brāhmins had become firmly entrenched, and Manu was very stern to the Śūdras. For example, he says ;

"Let a Śūdra who commits adultery with a woman of twice-born, be placed on an iron bed well-heated, with fire kept ablaze with logs thrown continuously till the sinful wretch be burnt to death." (viii, 372 and 374).

Manu held that the Śūdras must be reduced to slavery either—by purchase or without purchase, because they are created by God for the sake of serving others. (viii, 413)

The Brāhmin superiority should be considered as commencing from this period which could not have been earlier than the Hūṇa inroad to India in the 5th century A.D. It must have taken a few centuries before the influence of Manusmṛiti was felt. After the Manusmṛiti became popular, the king, too, became subordinate to the Brāhmins. In Manu's picture of society the Kshatriya supremacy has passed to the Brāhmin. On the whole, Jolly and Fick are right in

holding religious differences as an important cause of the origin and development, not of caste.

It must be noted that there were old sayings of Manu which were collected together as *Manusmṛiti* or *Mānava Dharma Sāstra*. According to legend there were fourteen Manus. The *Manusmṛiti* itself refers to the *Dharma Sāstras* of Atri, Gautama, Shaunaka and Vasishtha. It is important to reiterate that the geographical horizon of the *Mānava Dharma Sāstra* is confined to the region north of the Vindhya. It must be noted, however, that *Vishṇu Smṛiti* which was written after the *Smṛiti* of Yājñavalkya and *Manusmṛiti*, defines Āryavarta as not confined to the region described by Manu, but it applied to the whole of India.

The *Manusmṛiti* divides the society into two parts: the Āryans and the non-Āryans. The non-Āryans were called *Anārya*, *Dasyu* and *Mlechcha*. The term *Dasyu* also included the *Chandālas*, *Shvāpakas* etc.

Manu says: 'Let every man, according to his ability, give wealth to Brāhmins, detached from the world and learned in Scripture; such a giver shall attain Heaven after this life.' (xi, 6). Very early in the statutes, a universal law is proclaimed, the spirit of which prevades the whole code. This law lays down that whatever exists in the Universe is all, in effect, though not in form, the wealth of the Brāhmins, since the Brāhmin is entitled to it all by his primogeniture and eminence of birth.

Among the *Smṛitis* and commentaries on them, the oft-quoted one is *Manu-smṛiti* and the popular version of it is one by Kalluka, who according to his own statement, was a Brāhmin. By making Manu the creator of the world and receiving the

law direct from him, the Brāhmīns have given a divine origin to their law.

Manusmṛiti gives very valuable information, both sociological and religious. It traces step by step the history of the Brāhmin supremacy ; it shows how they rose from mere indigent mendicants to a priestly hierarchy. But it is important to remember that the Manusmṛiti did not provide for the cultural arrogance and exclusiveness of the Brāhmīns. In the Mānava dharmaśāstra (II: 238 & 241) it is stated that a Brāhmaṇa could learn the Vēdas even from a Śūdra.

The Brāhmīns' superiority in learning was due to their excellent system of compulsory education. The secret of the respect enjoyed by the Brāhmīns is given in Manusmṛiti itself for they possess the Vēda. The Vēdas are sealed books for 90% of the Hindus even today. When did this monopoly appear ? It must have occurred considerably later than the time of Manu. Earlier, there does not seem to have existed a class restriction in the matter of education.

The date of Manu who gave the final shape to Manusmṛiti is not easily determinable. In the opinion of Monier Williams, the earliest version of Manusmṛiti does not appear before the 6th century B.C. The other commentaries are of much later date ; that of Mēdhatithi is estimated to be of the 9th century A.D., while that of Kalluka is estimated by Kane as of 13th century A.D. But the last text of Manusmṛiti which was in force for a long time seems to have appeared about the third century A.D. It must be remembered that the Manusmṛiti stands in close relation to the Mahābhārata, which contains about a tenth of the 2,700 of Manu's code. So it is later than the Mahābhārata and even later than the Arthaśāstra. In its present form the Manusmṛiti may be assigned to a period between 100 B.C. and A.D. 300.

*Development of Caste:* The Brāhmins took full advantage of the literary upheaval that took place during the patronage of the Guptas. They took the classical Sanskrit of the Gupta period as a medium of propaganda. They went through the ancient literature and suppressed those books that were inimical to their pretensions; they rewrote those that were favourable to them with additions and alterations to classical Sanskrit. Among the suppressed portions were those of the Vēdas that held no claim to Brāhmin superiority. Among those that were altered and added on were the Purāṇas, where the heroes are represented as doing homage to the Brāhmins. Even the Gods were made to obey the Brāhmins.

Manusmṛiti was revised and new clauses were inserted to give a legal status to the new relationship between their priest and the king. Since then the Brāhmins became the de-facto rulers of India. Brāhminism prospered in the court of kings.

A Brāhmin's killing of a Śūdra was pronounced to be equivalent merely to the killing of a cat, a mongoose, a frog, a lizard or crow. It was stated that to serve a Brāhmin learned in the Vēdas is the highest duty of a Śūdra. The Brahmin is by right the chief of this whole creation. He may without hesitation take the property of a Śūdra for the purpose of a sacrifice, because a Śūdra has nothing to do with sacrifices. If a Śūdra mentions the name and class of the twice-born with contumely an iron nail ten fingers long shall be thrust red hot into his mouth. If he arrogantly teaches Brāhmins their duty, the king shall cause hot oil to be poured into his mouth and into his ears. But no reciprocal punishments are prescribed for cantankerous Brāhmins. This is inconsistent with what was stated earlier (Mānava Dharmā Śāstra II: 238 & 241) that a Brāhmaṇa could learn the Vēdas even from a Śūdra.

The master stroke in Brāhmanic diplomacy was the creation of new orders of Kshatriyas by dvija baptism from the barbarians who came to India and from the indigenous Śūdras who looked for social superiority. As will be seen later, this scheme did not work properly in the extreme south where a well-defined class of Kshatratiyas did not exist.

*Formation of new castes:* The formation of new castes is not so common as that of sub-castes within a caste. The creation of new sub-castes is due to the following causes : (1) sometimes it is caused by migration to different parts of the country; (2) sometimes a new sub-caste is brought into existence by the adoption of a religious cult ; as Sir Alfred Lyall has said, "sects always tend to become sub-castes" : eg. Kabirpanthis ; (3) sub-castes are also formed by the adoption of new (and it is believed) reformed customs such as are followed by higher castes : eg. by forbidding the remarriage of widows or by adopting a certain nicety about food ; (4) another common cause is the adoption of new occupations. There have also been cases in which the adoption of a more dignified occupation has enabled sub-castes to join other castes of a better status.

The early European observers regarded the caste system as an artificial creation, as a device of a clever priesthood for the permanent division and subjection of the masses or even as the creation of a single law-giver.

Thus Ābbe Dubois, among others, speaks of it as the ingenious device of Brāhmins and clearly regards it as made by and for them. Ghurye holds the same view. He says : 'Caste is a Brāhmanic child of the Indo-Āryan culture, cradled in the land of the Ganges and thence transferred to other parts of India by the Brāhmin prospectors.' He regards caste as having arisen as a result of a racial difference and that endogamy, the outstanding feature of

the system was first developed by the Brāhmīns in the plains of North India, and thence conveyed as a culture trait to other areas. But some writers have argued that it could not have been the ingenious creation of the Brāhmīns and they are of opinion that the origin of the caste is *organic* rather than *artificial*. See the views of Nesfield, Ibbleston, Dahlmann, Blunt, Senart, Hutton (p. 173 ff) Sarat Chandra Roy etc. Hutton's view is acceptable.<sup>12</sup>

(1) *Nesfield* regarded caste as a natural product of society in the creation of which religion played no part at all. He thinks that *function* and function alone was the foundation upon which the whole caste system of India was built up.

(2) *Denzil Ibbleston* held that caste is little more than an ordinary class society, made rigid, and he puts forth the tribal and religious explanation.

(3) *Risley*, like several others, relied mainly on the theories of race and hypergamy to explain the caste system.

(4) *Senart* held that caste is the normal development of ancient Āryan institutions which assumed that form in the struggle to adapt themselves to the conditions with which they came into contact in India.

(5) *Sarat Chandra Roy* held that the Hindu caste system was rather the outcome of the interaction between the Indo-Āryan varṇa system on the one hand and the tribal system of the pre-Dravidian and the occupation class system of Dravidian on the other.

(6) *Hutton* opines that the pre-Dravidian taboo on food and marriage based on a fear of the evil mania of strangers is responsible for the caste system.

Though several other writers have offered various explanations, it appears that Hutton provides a conclusion when he points out that the geographical isolation of India, the primitive association of the power of transmission of qualities with food, primitive beliefs about *totemism*, mania and soul-stuff of like matter, ideas about ritual purity and pollution and the possibility of purification, the cultural role of the joint family and the institutions of ancestor-worship and the sacramental meal, the belief in past and future births and the karma theory, the beliefs in the magic associated with various occupations, economic guilds, the clash between matrilineal and patrilineal ways of life and between races resulting in colour prejudice and notions about superiority and inferiority, and the development of society into religious classes with exclusive privileges, all these factors were operative in the evolution of the caste system. Though several scholars, European and Indian, have devoted much attention to the study of caste, the systematic study of the lower orders in ancient India is still a desideratum.

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### SECTION III

## RISE AND GROWTH OF THE CASTE SYSTEM IN TAMIL NĀDU

It is commonly believed that the caste system appeared in Tamilaham in the Śāngam age. But we do hear of certain denominations which pertain to an earlier, i.e. the pre-historic epoch. Thus we hear of the Vēṭṭuvār, Villiyar, Irūlār and Pallār in the Śāngam works. But they appear to have been the descendants of the pre-Tamil or pre-historic people belonging to the Proto-Austroloid or Negroid stock. Perhaps the Tudiar, Pāñar, Paṛayar and Kadambar also belonged to the class of original tribes. True, these names are traceable to Tamil, as for example, those who played on the Paṛai or drum were called Paṛaiyar. But while the name could have appeared later the people to whom the name applied might have been the earliest inhabitants.<sup>13</sup>

In the Puṇanānūru there is a reference to the four castes : ‘Vēṛgumai terinda nārpālullum.’<sup>14</sup> Obviously this specifies the Indian traditional four-fold caste system. Perhaps, even much earlier, i.e. by the time of Tolkāppiyam, which appears to have been composed prior to the classics of the third Śāngam, the four castes are specified, though by different names. Tolkāppiyar designates them as Andānar, Araśar, Vaiśiyar and Vellālar. Whether the Vellālar were equated with the Sūdras or not has been a matter of controversy ; in later times the Vellālas formed only one section of the Sūdras. Perhaps the entire class of Sūdras of the North Indian classification was then described in Tamilaham as Vellālar. However, this difference in the nomenclature is inexplicable.<sup>15</sup>

It is notable that the kshatriyas as such never figured in Tamilaham. The 'Vēndar,' the Tamil equivalent, was a composite class sometimes consisting of Vaiśyās also ; this difference from the North Indian practice is inexplicable.

Brāhmins, Kshatriyas and Vaiśyas were considered by Tolkāppiyar as Dvijas, and as such, they alone were entitled to wear the sacred thread. This is clearly an Āryan practice. No reference is found in any of the Śaṅgam works also to people of any non-Brāhmin castes wearing it.

A doubt arises whether the Āryans had imposed their entire Varṇa distinction among the Tamils before the Śaṅgam age. One has to remember the variations in regard to nomenclature, in respect of Tolkāppiyar's description of the duties and privileges of the various castes from the theoretical prescriptions of the Āryans are noticed. For instance, though warfare is the traditional avocation of the Kshatriyas, Tolkāppiyar enunciates different prescription at various places of his work. In one context he says that the weapons of war can be handled by Vēndar as well as Vaiśyas:<sup>16</sup> at another, he states that the Śūdras, too, if commissioned by kings, are entitled to handle weapons.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, Tolkāppiyar maintains that Brāhmins, too, could become kings at times.<sup>18</sup> Again, we learn from several Śaṅgam classics that Maravar and Maṭavar were included among fighters. Thus the Āryan four-fold classification must have penetrated into Tamilaham but gradually and that accounts for the variations.

The indigenous social stratification among the early Tamils was based on physiographic distinctions, which led to different occupations. The five-fold divisions Pālai, Kurinchi, Mullai, Marudam and Neydal appear clearly in the Śaṅgam works. The residents of these regions came to

be known respectively as the Maravar, Kuṭavar, Āyar, Uṭavar and Paradavar. But the distribution was largely conventional: transgressions of the regional barriers in respect of occupations were not infrequent. Thus, for example, in Kuriñchi, spinning of cotton yarn is known to have been undertaken. The tending of cows was not confined to the Mullai. It is learnt that early in the morning the sound of churning curd was heard from the houses in Pālai, and presumably it must have been common in other regions as well. It appears that the Kuṭava from the Kuriñchi territory could settle in the Mullai land and become an Idaiya (shepherd or cowherd); if he came to Marudam and took to cultivation he would become a Vellālan. Similarly a Vellālan could settle in the Kuriñchi land and become a Kuṭava. Even a fisherman could change his occupation; but this was rarely done, because his training was more of a specialised kind than those of the people of Kuriñchi, Mullai and Marudam. However, the flexibility that existed in the Śaṅgam age is different from the occupational division of the Varṇāshrama Dharma of the Āryans. In Tamilaham of the Śaṅgam age there was a fusion of the horizontal and vertical divisions of society.

We see that by the age of the Śaṅgam classics numerous professions had appeared. The question arises as to how far the entry into the various professions was governed by birth. In other words, the question is whether the caste system, the typical institution of Hinduism, had appeared in the Śaṅgam age in its full form.

Sometimes a facile view is put forward that the early Tamils, including those of the Śaṅgam age, had no caste distinction and that caste was introduced only by the Āryans. This does not seem to be fully borne out by the known facts. In the first place, though we hear of Brāhmins, we

do not find the other divisions so clear-cut as in the Aryan system. The Kshatriya is hardly mentioned; on the other hand, as stated earlier, peoples called Maravar, Maļavar and others formed the warriors. The duties assigned to the Vaiśyas and Śūdras, too, were discharged by several classes of people. If the four-fold caste system based on colour were introduced systematically by the Āryans these imperfections and lacunae are inexplicable.

Secondly, in the Śaṅgam works themselves, we find the mention of several groups which became the basis of caste organisation in later times. There are numerous divisions which were not contemplated in the Āryan system of caste based on colour.

What appears probable is that there emerged among the Tamils social divisions based upon their occupations which were determined largely by the region in which they lived. Gradually, the Kuṭavar, Āyar, Vellālar, Maravar and Paradavar, the people of Kuṭiñji, Mullai, Marudam, Pälai and Neydal respectively, tended to become endogamous groups. Pre-marital love and marriage seem to have normally occurred on the basis of these divisions of society. But soon, within the age known as that of the Śaṅgam epoch itself, there appeared subdivisions among the five divisions. These subdivisions were based on further occupational distribution on the one hand and the differences in economic position on the other. Thus, for example, a distinction arose between Vēṭṭuvār and Kuṭavar, the former denoting hunters and the latter hillmen pursuing more docile occupations. Moreover, among the Kuṭiñji people who were originally known as Kuṭavar, there appeared another subdivision. Economically the lower section came to be known as Kodiyar and Kodichiyar while the upper one was continued to be called Kuṭavar and Kuṭattiyar. Subsequently, groups pursuing

auxiliary occupations appear like the smiths and potters, and in course of time, even further subdivisions rise among them. Occupation determined the caste, and sometimes occupations transgressed the barriers of the old regional division. Thus, for example, in Kurjñchi, spinning of cotton yarn was done. The tending of cows and procuring cow's milk and the milk products were not confined to Mullai. It is learnt that early in the morning the sound of churning curd was heard from the houses in Pälai, and presumably therefore, from those of other regions as well.

We hear of several sub-castes in Puranänūru, viz. the Mallan, Küttañ, Pāñan, Kadamban, Tudiyan, Paraiyan, and Pulaiyan. Clearly these groups came into being on the basis of the different occupations pursued by them. But it is important to remember that the same anthology, Puranänūru (183) shows that the conception of the four-fold divisions on the Āryan pattern had been known and adopted. Moreover, Puranänūru accords a higher social position to the Brāhmañ. Stanza 224 of Puranänūru says that Brāhmañins performed 'Vēda Vēlyi' i.e., sacrifices prescribed by the Vēdas. Brāhmañins devoted their time to learning and the patronage of Vēdic lore. It was believed that those who caused harm to Brāhmañins were heinous sinners. Kings patronized Brāhmañins by bestowing gifts of lands on them. It is interesting to learn that Ahanänūru, (337) speaks of the carrying of messages as having been entrusted to Brāhmañins. Tolkäppiyam and Tirumurugārruppañai also prescribe the role of messengers to Brāhmañins. Padiruppattu describes their six-fold duties. (3rd Decad : 24)

It does not, however, seem reasonable to assume that all the Brāhmañins in early Tamil Nādu were Āryan immigrants from the north. The persistence even to this day of divisions among the southern Brāhmañins into Vadama, Briha-

charanam and Ashtasahasram shows that only one section of Brāhmins had come from the north. The others were all indigenous people of Tamilaham who were enlisted in the class of Brāhmins.

The few who came brought their ideas, institutions and culture with them into the new country. Almost from the outset the Brāhmin immigrants sought the favour of the ruling king and succeeded in establishing their influence in the royal courts. In due course, this led to their acquisition of a lofty position in society and a splendid opportunity for spreading their ideas. But, on account of the intrinsic strength of the social and cultural set-up of the indigenous people, a total supplanting of the old by the new was impossible. What occurred, therefore, was a social and cultural fusion.

This was reflected in the caste system. The indigenous divisions and sub-divisions based entirely on occupations came to be amalgamated with the four-fold division based on colour. In actuality only the rise of the Brāhmin caste was the immediate effect of this change. The other sub-divisions of the Āryan caste were later attempted to be yoked into the existing order, although the Kshatriya and Vaiśya groups have always remained numerically small.

In this connection it is noteworthy that the advent of the Buddhists and Jains into the Tamil country was indirectly responsible for certain changes in the caste system in the south. There was acute rivalry between Brāhmins on the one hand and Buddhists and Jains on the other. An inevitable result of this rivalry was an increase in the rigidity of the caste system. The privileges of caste were jealously guarded. Another result was the growth of numerous subcastes which

appeared side by side with the increased rigidity of the system.

The caste system assumed an hereditary character even in the Śāngam age. But there was a considerable measure of laxity in the choice of occupations. For example, Nakkīrar, the Brahmin, took to conch-cutting and to the trade on bangles. They were called ‘Vēlāppārpār’. There were many merchants, artisans and agriculturists besides Brāhmins who took to the higher arts of learning and composing poems. The kings who were considered Kshatriyas married from the Vellāla caste and some Vellālas became kings, too.

Attempts to classify the castes on the basis of racial origin have been made by certain writers. V. A. Smith thought that the Villavar or the bowmen were akin to Bhils and that they, as well as the Mīnavar or fishermen represented the earliest inhabitants and that they were akin to the aboriginal tribes in Malaya, Australia and other countries.

M. Srīnivasa Aiyangar stated (in his Tamil Studies pp. 61 ff) that the Valayar, Pallar, Śāñār, Idaiyar, Maravar, Paraiyar, Kaikkōlar, Kammālar, Vanniyar, Kaljar and Ambalakkārar were either Nāgas or were descendants of a mixed race of Nāgas and Dravidians. He holds that Kuṭavas alone represented the pure Nāgas. This seems to be an oversimplification of a complex problem. The Nāgas appear in various places of India and at different stages of her history. Though no satisfactory explanation of their origin has been provided, it seems that they were of proto-Austroloid stock. There appears to have been an admixture of this element with the Dravidian population. To differentiate the Āryan from the others in South India is not also an easy affair. There had occurred such an admixture of the Āryan and Dravidian

elements that except in respect of a small minority, the demarcation is not historically valid. A certain measure of wishful thinking on the one hand, and an attempt to read the present into the past on the other, have vitiated the proper approach to the study of this question of caste, its origin and development.

While one extreme school of writers blames the Āryans for having introduced the caste system into the south, the opposite school holds that the Āryans who came to the south were the harbingers of culture into a barbarous country and all that is admirable in the Tamil civilisation is a consequent product of the advent of the Brāhmins.<sup>19</sup> Neither of these extreme views is borne out by the known facts of history. We have already seen that caste in its entirety was not an importation from outside. Regarding the other extreme view of the Āryan culture having been the only basis of the Tamil civilisation, as represented by the Saṅgam classics and the later works, it must be observed that though there is an admixture of Āryan ideas and practices even in the Saṅgam age, it is incorrect to think that the Āryans came and imported *en bloc* their ideas either totally discarding or destroying the existing culture. In fact, the Āryans absorbed some of the ideas and institutions of the Tamils. If the Tamils had not built up a civilisation worth the name before the advent of the Āryans, the later Tamil culture would have been a mere replica of the North Indian civilisation which is not the case, judged from any standard. In fact, it is incorrect to speak of the Āryanisation of South India, as is frequently done. Assuredly the impact of Āryans on Tamilaham is not comparable to the Romanisation of Gaul. If an European comparison were to be sought at all, it would be more appropriate to compare it with the Greek contact

with the Aegean civilisation as a result of which the later Hellenic culture developed.

That the Āryan culture was not introduced into Tamilāham *in toto* is clear from the circumstance that the distinctive Āryan pattern of caste did not establish itself completely supplanting the existing divisions. As seen earlier, there was an amalgamation of the indigenous and exotic patterns i.e., the occupational and colour bases. This is evident from the Śaṅgam classics which speak of both classes of subdivisions of society. That the exotic system took some time before it could be recognised as the important social factor is seen from the circumstance that while Purānāñūru makes just a mention of the fourfold division and the numerous other castes based on occupation, Tolkāppiyam gives a greater prominence to the Āryan or Varṇa basis of caste. However, Tolkāppiyar speaks of the four castes in the Tamilian terminology; he mentions the Andañar (Brāhmins), Araśar (Kings or Kshatriyas), Vaiśyar and Vēlālar (cultivators, corresponding to Śūdras). Obviously he groups the large class of people engaged in various occupations into those of brāhmins, rulers, businessmen and śūdras. He provides details about each of the castes. Brāhmins wore the holy thread, had the *Kārahām* or the vessel containing sacred water for ceremonial ablutions, the *Mukkōl* or a threepronged staff and *Maṇai* a wooden plank to be used as a seat. It is significant that Tolkāppiyam says that the weapons of war are not to be handled by any but the men of the two middle castes i.e., Kshatriyas and Vaiśyas. Śūdras, too, if sent on government business, were entitled to have weapons. Tolkāppiyam states that Brāhmins could also become kings. These are clear deviations from the traditional prescriptions.

A remarkable feature of Tolkāppiyar's account of the castes is that it does not include the indigenous tribal

divisions and subdivisions among castes. This suggests that Tolkāppiyam was concerned with the enforcement of the northern pattern of caste. The only local adaptation he makes is that he equates the Vellālas (Vēlāñmāndar), the cultivators, with the Śūdras.

It is sometimes said that, as stated earlier, the stanza (335) in Puranānūru seems to protest against the Āryan -system of caste, holding that Tamilaham accepts only the division of the people into four groups viz., Tuḍiyar, Pāñar, Paraiyar, and Kadambar. But the context in which the work is set, as well as the restriction of the local divisions into the four groups mentioned above, show that it does not contain an exhaustive enumeration of all the units in Tamilaham. Set in the martial context, the poem speaks only of the martial or warlike sections among the people and it cannot be taken as an exhaustive division. On the whole, it seems that the regional divisions and their numerous subdivisions continued to be the basic structure in the Śāngam age, while the Āryan classification was introduced from the north, which appeared as a kind of vertical differentiation cutting across the horizontal division already in existence.

By the time of the Tamil Epics, the two forces appeared to be getting entrenched, each in its own way. On the one hand, the supreme position of the Brāhmīns was established and strengthened by religious sanction, and on the other, the multiplication of subdivision among the regional groups of old increased. Ascetics and those who performed penance lived in separate quarters away from the madding crowd. The Brahmin purōhit became the master of ceremonies in connection with marriages among the other sections of the Hindu community. Kaṇṇagi is said to have

requested the God of Fire to exempt Brāhmaṇins and ascetics from the ravages of fire when the city was to be burnt.

But there is little attempt to enforce the rigid prescriptions in respect of the Kshatriya and Vaiśya castes. The royal armies did not consist of Kshatriyas but of Maṇavar or Eyinar, who according to the Āryan classification, must have been assigned to the Śūdra group. Again, trade appears to have been common to the Vaiśyas and Vellālas. Alongside of this relaxation in the fourfold classification the multiplication of subdivisions in the regional groups went on apace. The smiths are grouped more rigidly into blacksmiths, goldsmiths and carpenters. Weavers, cobblers and other groups emerge. Differentiations in the social scale of superiority appear clearly in the age of the Śaṅgam. The idea of untouchability on the part of certain castes comes into vogue by the time of the Epics. Not only the Brāhmaṇins but certain sections of Vaiśyas also dreaded pollution by members of the lower caste. For instance the Śilappadikāram says that the goldsmith took care to be at a distance from Kōvalan, the Vaiśya. Though even in the Śaṅgam age certain sections like the Pulaiyar and Paraiyar were treated as low born, the practice of untouchability among the higher sections of the Śūdras was a development of the later period, namely that of the Epics.

In the Śaṅgam age itself the emergence of a large number of sub-castes among the last or the so-called Śūdra category is a notable feature. Thus, for instance, from the Śaṅgam works we find references to the undermentioned groups : Alavar, Idaiyar, Iiyavar, Umanar, Ulavar, Eirriyar, Kaḍambar, Kammiyar, Kalamar, Kuyavar, Kuṭavar, Kuṛumbar, Küttar, Kollar, Kōśar, Tachchar, Tuḍiyar, Tērpākar, Tunaiyar, Paradavar, Paṛaiyar, Pāṇar, Pulaiyar, Porunar,

Maļavar, Vadugar, Vaṇṇār, Vāṇigar, and Vēdar. They were all occupation-oriented divisions. But so far as our knowledge goes, there was no inhibition among them in respect of inter-dining. It is presumable that restrictions on inter-marriage between the various castes, however, seem to have gradually emerged even during the Śāṅgam age. In the north the multiplication of *jātis* and the increase of caste restrictions developed in the period of the Dharmasūtras, several centuries after the Vēdic age. Perhaps similar tendencies appeared only in the Śāṅgam and post Śāṅgam epochs.

When could the Āryans have introduced their pattern of stratification based on Varṇa into Tamilaham? From the circumstantial evidence it is possible that the introduction of the Northern caste system into the Āndhra country took place in the age of the Sātavāhanas. During that period new sub-castes appeared on an occupational basis such as gōlikas (shepherds) and hālikas (ploughmen). We learn that Sātakarṇi I who ascended the throne about 189 B.C. performed a horse sacrifice. These provide some indications that in the Āndhra country the Āryan ideas and the Varṇāshrama system had taken root before the 2nd century B.C. Not only that; some of the Sātavāhana kings were keen on preserving the Chaturvaraṇya pattern or Varṇāshrama Dharma scrupulously. Gautamīputra Sātakarṇi (c. A.D. 80—104) was a great supporter of the Brāhmīns. An inscription records how an Āndhra king Vilivayakura II destroyed about A.D. 126 a Śaka chief and ‘prevented the mixing of the four castes’.

It is not too much to hold that about this time the Āryan caste system entered the Tamil country too. The fact that it presented the features of the Āryan pattern of caste indicates that by that period, probably before the Tolkappiyar’s time (2nd or 1st century B.C.) it had found its way

into Tamilaham. But it must have been introduced gradually ; however, by the time of the Great Pallavas it became firmly rooted. We find Mahēndravarman II (c. A. D. 668—70) insisting on the preservation of the Varṇāshrama system.<sup>20</sup> In fact, the Pallavas were *par excellance* the harbingers of Āryanism into the Tamil country.

It was during their period that the dominance of the Brāhmins in Tamilaham became pronounced. The Pallavas exalted the Brāhmins.<sup>21</sup> It was beginning from the time of the Imperial Pallavas that the kings and chiefs extended a reception to Brāhmins and settled them in separate villages, which were known as ‘Agrahāras’. Since they were endowed to Brāhmins they were also known as Brahmadēyas. It was for the purpose of patronising religion that Brāhmins were invited and settled. In the Madras Museum Plates there is a reference to a group of Brāhmins brought from Magadha and settled in the south.

Belonging to the Pallava period there are several grants bestowed on Brāhmins by rulers for studying the Vēdas and Vēdāngas.<sup>22</sup> Several sub-castes among non-brāhmins had arisen. For example, an inscription of the Pallava king Nandi Pōttaraiyar speaks of ‘Aruvai Vanīgar’ who were cloth merchants. In their own turn Brāhmins are said to have gifted lands to a Vishnu temple, Jain Palli and Pidari shrine and also for a Vyākarana Hall.

*Only castes with distinctive characteristics are noticed here : Kādavar :—*A peculiar caste name figuring in the Pallava and later inscriptions is that of the Kādavar. Perhaps, Kādava was the same as Kāduvetti, a name applied to the Pallavas because they cleared several wooded regions and made them suitable for occupation. More probably

Kādavar denoted a class of people who lived in the forests. Was it the name of a caste also?

*Tattalikottuvār* :—In South India, the age of the Pallavas witnessed the construction of temples. Among the attendants attached to the temples from the time of the Pallavas were the Tattalikotṭuvār. Probably they were drummers who formed from this time a separate caste. Dr. Minakshi's view is that it did not specify a caste because the Muktēśvara inscription suggests that a Brāhmaṇ was employed for the purpose. This might have been a matter of chance. It is probable that in the beginning i.e. in the age of the Pallavas those who beat the metallic plate during the time of offering were known as Tattalikotṭuvār to whatever caste they belonged. Very soon, however, a class of drummers belonging to a non-brāhmaṇ caste emerged. 'Tattalikotṭi' occurs in the Tandantōṭṭam Plates, and Krishṇa Sastry seems to be right in considering them as a caste of drummers. In certain other inscriptions of the Pallava period Tattalikotṭuvār are referred to as musicians and pipers attached to the temple. It is found from an inscription of the time of Kampavarman<sup>23</sup> that as many as sixteen Tattalikotṭuvār were appointed for service in a temple and the probability is that they formed a troupe of drummers and musicians.

*Uvaiccan*: We hear also of Uvaiccan or Uvaccan in the Pallava times. They were in all probability drummers different from those who beat the metallic plates. When exactly they constituted a distinct caste and whether they were endogamous with the Tattalikotṭuvār it is difficult to judge.

*Adigalmār* :—Connected with the temple we hear for the first time under the Pallavas the Dēvaradiyār or Dēvadāsis under the name of Adigalmār. The probability is that this

class of women attendants and dancers must have arisen with the emergence of structural temples. The term *Adigalmār* originally denoted women dancers. They were otherwise known as ‘Māṇikkattār’ and ‘Kanigaiyār’. In the big temples of the Chōla period there were numerous women dancers. An inscription in the Tanjavur temple states that Rājarāja transferred a number of women from the different parts of Chōlamandalam as dancers attached to the temple of Rājarājēśvara.”<sup>24</sup>

*Archakas* or temple priests were appointed among Brāhmins from an early time, at any rate from the Pallava period. The names of priests which occur in Pallava inscriptions testify to this. For instance, we find mentioned the names, Ananta Śivan, Ananta Śivāchārya, Dattaśivan, Pullaśarman and Madhusūdana Śivan. Those attached to Śiva temples were variously called Ar̄chakas,<sup>25</sup> Gurukka<sup>26</sup> and Śivabrahmaṇas or Śaivāchāryas.<sup>27</sup>

In later Pallava inscriptions we find that those who performed the divine rites inside Vishṇu temples were designated by the title ‘Bhaṭṭa’. Śridhara Bhaṭṭa, the son of Dāmodara Bhaṭṭa, was doing the ar̄chana inside the Sri Gōvardhana temple at Uttaramērūr in the time of Kampa-varman.<sup>28</sup>

In the Tiruvallikkeni inscription of Dantivarman the priest of the temple is called Kulamkilār. Dr. Minakshi thinks that Kula stands for Dēvakula and that it was used for both Śiva and Vishṇu temples. The literary meaning of ‘Kulamkilār’ is ‘temple proprietor’ and it may denote either the temple authorities or the temple priests. But the greater probability is that it denoted the authorities or owners of the temple. It must be noted that ‘Kilār’ in later times denoted proprietors or owners of land. Tavasikal or temple

sweepers and Vāyil-kēlpār, perhaps temple officers, were non-brāhmaṇ members of the temple staff.

*Agambadiyar*: An agricultural caste figuring in the Pallava inscription is that of the Agambadiyar. In the Uttaramērūr inscription of Dantivarman this agricultural caste of peasants or ryots is known as 'Ahambadi Udaiyāns'. They were not an affluent class of people and they lived in humble houses in the Pallava period.

*Idaiyar*: Among other castes of the Śūdras indirect references to Idaiyar are found in the later Pallava inscriptions. Idaiyar denoted then, as later, the cattle-breeders. But it must be remembered that the Idaiyar are mentioned in the Saṅgam works too. Probably the poets, Idaiyar Neḍunkiranār and Idaiyan Sēndan Koṭṭanār, authors of certain verses in the Ahanānūru, were members of this caste of shepherds.

*Ilavar*: We find references in later Pallava inscriptions to Ilampūtchi which meant a tax on 'Ilavar', who were toddy drawers. Therefore, the sub caste of Ilavar appears to have arisen in or before 7th century A.D.<sup>29</sup>

Thus we find that during the Pallava and early Pāṇḍya rule certain subdivisions of the Śūdras had emerged. They were based on the different occupations pursued. We cannot assert that we have a knowledge of all the sub-castes that had existed during this period, because it cannot be claimed that the sources of our information, namely the inscriptions and literary references, are exhaustive.

*Caste in the Chōla and later Pāṇḍya Periods  
(10th century to 15th century.)*

There is clear evidence to show that in the age of the Imperial Chōlas the caste system became rigid. This was

primarily so because this age witnessed the increased prominence given to temples, and it is well known that temples and society of the medieval period enforced the caste regulations rigorously. These restrictions in their turn led to the growth of sub-castes with differences in usage and social status among them. The position of the castes occurring in the original sources of the period may now be considered.

The Brāhmaṇins became very dominant, not only as temple priests and leaders of the religious observances, but also as ministers and officers as well as sēnāpatis of the governments. Primarily they were continued to be respected for their learning and religious authority. In A. D. 1129, the Sabhā of Tiruppēr recorded in an inscription their gratitude to a certain Bhaṭṭa whose prayers were believed to have been of great use to the village in a critical stage of its history. Further, regarding the position of other castes,, the bhaṭṭas were considered the authorities. Regarding the anulōma caste, the bhaṭṭas of a village in the reign of Kulōttunga I, consulted the Śāstras and gave their verdict on the professions to be followed by the anulōma caste of Rathakārs.

The *Kshatriyas*, as such, do not figure prominently. The group of traders and businessmen increased with the growth in the affluence of the kingdom and they became vaiśyas. But the dividing line between the Vaiśyas and high class Śūdras was not clearly drawn. Economic position combined with social gradation determined the rank of people in the Vaiśya-Śūdra relationship.

*Mixed Marriages*: During this period we hear of several cases of mixed marriages and of the decisions given by the learned among the Brāhmaṇins regarding the status of the offspring of such mixed marriages. Where a man of particular caste married a woman of a lower caste it was called

*anulōma* marriage but where, on the other hand, the woman married a man of a lower caste it was called *pratilōma* marriage. Such unions and the subsequent ones between the offspring of such unions are held to account for the rise of several sub-castes. The treatises of Vasiṣṭha, Baudhāyana, Gautama and others and above all the *Manu-smṛiti* give us the lists of the castes so formed. In general principle the *pratilōma* castes rank below the *anulōma* and at the bottom of the scale are the *chandālas*, born of a Śūdra male and a Brāhmaṇī female and other mixed castes of *Chandāla* parentage. The commentators of Manu were at variance with each other in decreeing the status of the different types of mixed marriages. Therefore, it was left to the elders and particularly the learned among the Brāhmaṇins to decide each question as it arose.

As mentioned earlier, in the reign of Kulottunga I, the bhaṭṭas of Rājasarya-Chaturvēdimaṅgalam consulted the śāstras and laid down the professions to be followed by the *anulōma* caste of Rathakārs.<sup>30</sup> From an inscription of A.D. 1169, the class of Rathakārs is seen to have included goldsmiths, blacksmiths and stone masons as well as carpenters.<sup>31</sup>

*Vellālas*: An influential community of the non-brāhmaṇins is that of the *Vellālas*. There are several categories of the *Vellālas*. In the Chōla period itself the distinction between Tondaimaṇḍalam *Vellālas*, Kārkārta *Vellālas*, Nāñchināḍ *Vellālas*, and Koṅgu *Vellālas* had emerged, based on the region occupied by them and on the basis of vegetarianism adopted by the different sections. Invariably they were landowners and cultivators. There are variations in the customs and manners of the different sections of the *Vellālas*. While all the other categories of *Vellālas* employ Brāhmaṇin priests in their sacred ceremonies, the Koṅgu *Vellālas* employed

sometimes their own caste men for the purpose; the barber, dhōbi, and others also played their allotted part in the ceremonies.<sup>22</sup>

Some early writers thought the Koṅgu Veṭṭālas like the rest of the people of the region had come from the Gaṅga country in the Mysore country. That was based only on the phonetic similarity between the Koṅgu and Gaṅga. In reality the Koṅgus are among the earliest of the Tamils. There are several references in the Śaṅgam works like the Puranānūru and Ahanānūru in the Koṅgu country and Koṅgu people. There were no doubt frequent contacts with the neighbouring Chēra, Chōla and Pāṇḍya powers as well as with the Hoysalas, Muslims of the South, Vijayanagar and Mysore powers.

Probably it was about the 9th century that the various subdivisions among the Veṭṭālas appeared. Principally they were connected with agriculture. But from an early period there had emerged the distinction between ‘Uṭṭuvittuṇbār’ and ‘Uṭṭutuṇbār.’ Though in later times there were interchanges among them, up to the end of the Imperial Chōla period, certain sections like the Koṇḍaikkaṭṭi Veṭṭālar and Kārkārta Veṭṭālar were pre-eminently ‘Uṭṭuvittuṇbār’ or landlords.

The original stronghold of the Koṇḍaikkaṭṭi Veṭṭālas was Tonḍaimaṇḍalam. Later they spread from there throughout Tamil Nādu. Some of them were employed in the King’s court and others as military leaders during expansionist times.<sup>23</sup>

Burton Stein has advanced an interesting theory. He describes the Veṭṭālar-Brāhmaṇ relations as an ‘alliance,’ and adds that in South India, peasants held the balance of secular power. He adds that this ‘alliance’ formed one

reason for the failure of a Kshatriya tradition in medieval south India. This seems to be an exaggeration. Though some Vellālas were employed as ministers and generals, it is too much to speak of an ‘alliance’ between Brāhmins and Vellālas.<sup>34</sup> Nor did the failure of the Kshatriya tradition appear only in Tamil Nādu.

Steve Barnett<sup>34</sup> says, ‘judging from present Konḍaikkattī Vellāla organization, the particular economic and social conditions created configurations in caste, culture and local hierarchy that persisted until the advent of British imperialism.’ The sense of superiority persists to this day, though covertly.

All the Konḍaikkattī Vellālar even within the same village do not intermarry. Within each village cluster there are smaller endogamous units called *Vakayaras*.

Apart from the proliferation of individual Vellālar castes, all Vellālars can be divided into vegetarian (Śaiva Vellālar) and non-vegetarian. Among the Śaiva Vellālars, Śēkkilār of the 12th century and Meykaṇḍār of the 13th century were famous. Śēkkilār was a Konḍaikkattī Vellāla, while Meykaṇḍār was a Śaiva Vellāla belonging to the Kalappālar group. His father was Achyuta Kalappālar.

When did the distinction between Śaiva and other Vellālas emerge? Though the influence of Jainism and Buddhism had appeared early it was with the advent of the Bhakti movement in the 7th century A.D. that there seems to have appeared a great measure of emphasis on vegetarianism. Many of the hymnists at temples were vegetarian Vellālas.

*Cheṭṭis*: The name Cheṭṭi figures in Tamil literature beginning from the time of Maṇimēkalai where we hear of Saduvan, a member of the mercantile community. In

fact, through the ages the Chettis had been associated with commercial activities. Though the Nāṭukkōṭṭai Chettis are the most outstanding group of this class, there were others like the Nagarattār Chettis, the Kāsukkāraṛ Chettis and Bēri Chettis.

*The Nāṭukkōṭṭai Chettis :* A remarkably enterprising community of people of Tamil Nādu are the Nāṭukkōṭṭai Chettis. Traders and money lenders for long, they had extended their activities over wide regions. They have been noted for their frugality though they spend lavishly on ceremonies. The Nāṭukkōṭṭai Chettiars are pious and charitable by nature. The famous temples at Chidambaram, Madurai and Tiruvarṇamalai have received considerable endowments and embellishments from rich Nāṭukkōṭṭai Chettiars. Being Śaivites, they do not generally care for Vaishnava temples. Even among Śaiva temples, only such as have special sanctity and have been sung about by the Śaiva Nāyanmār are patronised by them.

As in the case of several other communities there are legends regarding the origin of the Nāṭukkōṭṭai Chettis. However, many Chettis believe that they belong to the Vaiśya caste, though they do not wear the sacred thread and that their original home was Kāverippaṭtinam, from where they migrated to the regions in Madurai District on account of the persecution of a Chōla monarch when they refused to give their daughters in marriage to him. Other people, however, speak of a different story; they allege that the Nāṭukkōṭṭai Chettis are the descendants of a Muslim man and Kaḷla woman. It is difficult to determine the truth of this, though the Nāṭukkōṭṭai Chetti men shaved their heads completely in the past.

Among the Nāṭukkōṭṭai Chettiars there are three subdivisions : (1) Sundaram (2) Ariyūr and (3) Ilayattakkuḍi.

Each subdivision is divided into seven exogamous septs called 'kōils.' The caste Pañchāyat was powerful and it exercised considerable control over the community. A custom among the Nāṭukkōṭṭai Chēṭṭi women in the past was that they did not cover their breasts. The Nāṭukkōṭṭai Chēṭṭi women had their ear lobes artificially dilated, but seldom wore ornaments in them. Now things have changed and they wear ear ornaments.

*Bēri Chēṭṭis* :— The Bēri Chēṭṭis appear to have had an origin later than the Nāṭukkōṭṭai Chēṭṭis ; however, there is a possibility that they had come into existence as a separate group before the 14th century A.D. Though the Bēri Chēṭṭis also claim themselves to be Vaiśyas, they are grouped under the Left Hand Castes.

There is a tradition that the Bēri Chēṭṭis originally lived in Kāverippattinam near Kumbakōṇam and when the Chōla king wanted to marry a girl of the group, he expelled the members of the region. Another story is that when the king wanted to marry a Bēri Chēṭṭi girl the people adopted a stratagem. On the day fixed for the wedding all the Bēri Chēṭṭis left the village after tying a black dog to the post of the marriage pandal. The king became furious and forbade people of all the other castes to eat any thing or even drink water from the Bēris. It is believed that this led the Bēris to join the Left Hand group.

There is rivalry between the Bēri and the Kōmatṭi Chēṭṭis, each claiming superiority over the other. Some people consider the Kōmatṭis to be superior to the Bēris. Among the Bēris there are both vegetarians and non-vegetarians.

*Kōmatṭi Chēṭṭis* form an enterprising mercantile class settled in Salem, Coimbatore and Madras from the Telugu

country beginning from the Imperial Chōla period. In respect of the social hierarchy of caste they form an interesting group. They imitate Brāhmaṇ ways of life and they look down upon other non-Brāhmaṇs. They wear the holy thread and are noted for their opulence and thrift.

A peculiar thing about the Kōmatṭis is a legendary association of their caste with Māḍigas or Chakkiliyas. They are called ‘Mid-day Māḍigas.’ Many legends have been current in explanation of this. But they are not considered as trustworthy. Probably at some distant time in the past a sexual connection must have taken place between a Kōmaṭṭi and a Māḍiga.

Another curious thing is that sometime after the 14th century the Kōmaṭṭis had become divided into Right and Left Hand Kōmaṭṭis. In the 18th century there was an acute conflict between these two sections among the Kōmaṭṭis in Madras. Finally a compromise was effected and they settled in different parts of the city—the Right Hand in the west and the Left Hand in the east.

*Kudirai Chetti*: An interesting community that flourished about the time of the Imperial Chōlas is that of the Kudirai Chetti. There are references to them in the inscriptions of the Imperial Chōlas. Their name indicates that they were traders on horses. It is presumed that they were merchants from the west coast of Kerala and that they were engaged in horse-trade between Arabia and the regions in South India through Kerala.

Foreign travellers who came to South India in the medieval period like Marco Polo and Wassaf speak of the flourishing trade on horses between South India and foreign countries like Arabia and Burma. How long the Kudirai

Chettis pursued their horse trade is not known. But it is probable that artillery became powerful with the advent of the Westerners. The influence of horse trade and with that, the position of the Kudirai Chettis must have declined. Perhaps after the 17th century the Kudirai Chettis became merged with the Bēri Chettis.

*Kallar* : The Kallar have been known from a time earlier than the Imperial Chōla period. They had some affinities with the Agambadiyar and Maṇavar who have been dominant in the Tanjavur, Tiruchirappalli, Madura and the southern Districts from an early time.

Some Kallar in the Tanjavur District had assumed titles as kings of the Pallavas. But there is no likelihood of their having any communal or racial connection with the Pallavas. Probably some victories won by the Kalla chieftains over the Pallavas induced them to assume this title. However, some Kallar like the Maṇavar enlisted themselves in Pāṇḍyan and Chōla armies. The view that<sup>35</sup> the Kallar were only bandits and were not soldiers of an organized army is not correct. Perhaps after the overthrow of the Nāyak rule as also in the pre-Pallavan period they resorted to highway robbery.

Regarding the marriage custom, usually a Kallan marries the daughter of his father's sister even in spite of disparity in age. The Kallans had been for long adopting a system of limited polyandry. But latterly it is being abandoned. They are a powerful agricultural community in South Tamil Nādu. Their chief deity is Alagarśvāmi, who is the god installed in the famous temple of Alagarkoil.

*Maravar* : Having some affinity with the Kallar and Agambadiyar were the Maṇavar. The Maṇavar formed a

caste as early as the Śaṅgam epoch, at any rate by the time the Kalittogai was<sup>36</sup> composed. But from several of the Śaṅgam classics it is found that the term ‘Maṇavar’ was employed to denote one who possessed martial valour. The Puranānūru, for example in 31 : 9 and 43 : 11, Ahanānūru 35 : 6 and 53 : 10; Ainkurunūru : 352 : 1 and Tirukkuṛaṭ : 778 : 1 employ the term Maṇavar in this general sense. Here we are concerned with the name Maṇavar denoting the caste. Probably the caste name itself was derived from the general sense of bravery. In fact the Maṇavar caste consists of a brave and warlike people and were employed as soldiers in war. But during times of peace, they and their kinsmen took to highway robbery.

The Maṇavar are found in the largest number in the southern Districts. In the political sphere they seem to have wielded considerable influence under the Pāṇḍyas. In fact the Pāṇḍyan monarchs are believed to have themselves belonged to the Maṇava caste.

The Maṇavar have been described as typical of the earliest Dravidians in India. The effects of Brāhmaṇisation and Sanskritization have been least felt among the Maṇavār. Kallar and Agambariyar. But they trace their legendary descent to gods and heroes of the Āryan mythology. It is needless to state that they are inventions of the myth-makers' ingenuity. However, all the legends lay stress on the valour of the Maṇavar. Maṇavar, like the Nādār, Vanniyar and several others claimed themselves to be Kshatriyas.

There are several subdivisions among the Maṇavas. The Kondayānkōṭṭai Maṇavar form an important division. In their turn they are divided into six sub-tribes or as they call trees. Each tree is divided into three “Kilais” those belonging

to the same tree are not allowed to intermarry. Among the Konḍaiyānkōṭṭai Maṭavans, a girl can never marry her mother's brother because they are of the same kilai. On the other hand the children of a brother and sister should, wherever possible, marry.

Though the educated among the Kal்லar and Maṭavar dislike their being characterised as castes of criminal propensities, the fact is that they were criminal tribes, more or less professional cattle thieves.<sup>37</sup> Members of the Maṭava and Kal்லar castes have become sensitive to such characterisations. For instance, a protest was made on 2nd January 1975 by Mr. Kandaswamy, M. L. A., Forward Bloc, against the reference to Maṭavar made in a school text book that they were people who practised dacoity. This shows to what extent caste patriotism can go in controverting known historic facts.

Among the Maṭavar, Kal்லar and Agambadiyar, who were together described as 'Mukkulattōr,' marriage rarely takes place before puberty. Regarding the marriage celebrations among the Maṭavar zamindars there is a peculiarity: As stated in the Madras Census Report, 1891, a special custom obtaining among the Maṭava zamindars of Tirunelveli is the celebration of the marriage by means of a proxy for the bridegroom in the shape of a stick which is sent by the bridegroom and is set up in the marriage booth in his place. The Tāli is tied by some one representative of the bridegroom and the marriage ceremony becomes complete.

Among the general body of Maṭavas and Kal்லans the marriage takes place in the same manner as among the Tamil non-brāhmaṇins. The marriage takes place in the house of the bride. However, the tying of the tāli is done by the sister of the bridegroom. Thereafter the bride is taken

to the house of the bridegroom where they sit side by side on a plank. They receive the blessings of the elders. A feast follows. In respect of the different sections of the Maṇavar and Kallar there are no doubt minor variations in the rituals and ceremonies.

Widow remarriage is permitted. Among the Maṇavas Kallans and Agambadiyas both cremation and burial take place. In connection with the final death ceremony a position of superiority is claimed by the Maṇavar, particularly over the Agambadiyas. This is seen from the circumstance that the water for washing the corpse of one class of Maṇavas of Ramanathapuram is brought by the Agambadiyas. Another is in connection with the cremation ceremony of the Maṇavas; instead of the son of the deceased, it is one Agambadiyan who carries the fire pot to the burial ground. But this is not now common. The Maṇavas themselves carry the fire.

*Kaikkōlar*: As early as the Śaṅgam age we hear of the Kaikkōlar, a caste of weavers. We hear of them in inscriptions and literature beginning from the period of the Imperial Chōjas. Oṭṭakkūttan, the well-known Tamil poet, was a Kaikkōla by caste and he has sung about the Kaikkōlas. The Kaikkōlas came to be known as Mudalis; some of them bore the suffix Nāyanār. Some Kaikkōlar were soldiers (Vālperra Kaikkōlar). The Kaikkōlar have been called Seṅguntar (red dagger). That indicates their military prowess and warlike traditions. But the name Kaikkōlan is stated to have been derived from Kai (hand) and Kōl (shuttle). This suggests the traditional association of the caste with weaving.

The Kaikkōlas as a community have been divided into 72 Nāḍus or Dēśams. Of these 44 formed the “Mēl” (Western) and 24 “Kīl” (eastern) Nāḍus.

Some of the Kaikkōla women became dedicated to temples and they became dancers. It became the practice for every Kaikkōla family to dedicate at least one girl to temple service. But the Kaikkōlan dancers were distinct from the Dēvadāsis. However, in the post-Vijayanagar days there were intermarriages between Kaikkōlars and Dēvadāsis.

Curiously the men of the Kaikkōlan caste belonged to the left hand group, but the Kaikkōla dancer in the temple was considered to be a member of the right hand.

It is believed that the Nāyak kings of Madurai were dissatisfied with the quality of cloth woven by the Kaikkōlar and that they invited Kaikkōlas from the Telugu country and settled them in Madurai and farther South. Some of them are said to have come from Maharashtra and Gujarat area. They have been known as Paṭṭunūlkārar. They became richer and more influential than the Kaikkōlar.

*Nādār* : Apart from the legendary origin of the community, the view of Robert Caldwell is that Nādārs were emigrants from the northern coast of Śrī Laṅka. He found there a caste bearing the name Shāndrōr, of which, he said, Shānār is etymologically a corruption. He held that the Ījavas and Tiyars were also descendants of Shāndrōr colonists from Śrī Laṅka. One group, known as the Nāḍans, entered Tirunelveli sometime in the age of the Imperial Chōlas and after a time invited some shānārs who had come to South Travancore to serve as climbers of palmyra trees. Eventually there was some fusion between the Nādārs and Shānārs, though later the Nādārs of Virudhunagar, Śivakāsi and Tirunelveli held themselves superior to the Shānār.

The Shānārs and Nādārs occupy a peculiar status. Their abstinence from liquor and beef and the circumstance that their widows are not allowed to marry

again connect them with the higher section of non-Brahmins. On the other hand, their women were not allowed to wear cloth above their loins. Further, their association with toddy tapping was responsible for a lower social status ; they were not allowed entry into temples or the use of public wells. Now the Nādars are generally an affluent community thriving in the sphere of commercial business.

The history of a small portion of the community, known as the Nādans, is notable. They seem to have been employed as tax gatherers by the Pāṇḍyas and later by the Nāyaks. They were called ‘Nādāns’ or lords of the land. As hereditary tax collectors, the Nādans held civil authority over the lands in their control. They were concentrated in the region of Tiruchendūr and worked as petty lords under the Pōligārs. In recent times there have been frequent quarrels between the Nādans and Nādars.

*Pallis* : An early community is that of the Pallis. Apart from legends, they are definitely known to have been flourishing in the time of the Imperial Chōlas. It is probable that the Pallis were local chieftains known as Śambuvarāyar in the Chōla country. Certain inscriptions of the time of Kulōttunga III and Rājarāja III mention Śambuvarāyan as a title of local rulers.<sup>38</sup>

The Pallis claim a Kshatriya origin and legends connecting them with Kulaśēkhara Ālvār, one of the early kings of southern Kerala, are current. In the age of the Nāyaks of Tanjāvūr several Pallis assumed titles, Chēra, Chōla, Pāṇḍya, Śambuvarāyar, Nāyakar, Padayāchi, Piṭṭai, Reddi and so on. The Pallis of South Arcot are the most dominant among the Pallis.

Sanskritization is conspicuous among the Pallis. They imitate Brāhmaṇ ways. They tend to adopt vegetarianism ; they also discourage widow remarriage.

*Chakkiliyar*: The Chakkiliyar form one of the lower castes. There is no mention of them in early Tamil literature. They seem to have come from the Telugu and Kannada regions. Though they are now Tamil speaking people, their earlier mother tongue was Telugu or Kannada. Perhaps they came to Tamil Nādu in the wake of the Vijayanagar invaders.

They are workers on leather. It is their duty to remove the dead cattle from villages. In return the Chakkiliyar have to supply leather for agricultural purposes.

A peculiar feature is that in the Madurai District the men of the Chakkiliya caste belong to the right hand caste while the women belong to the left.

*Paraiyar*: One of the most downtrodden castes in Tamil Nādu is that of the Paraiyar. There has been a doubt whether they were known by the same name in the Śaṅgam age. No doubt there is a mention of the Paraiyan in the Puranānūru: 335 : 7., from which context it is seen that he belonged to the caste of drummers. On the other hand there is a view that the Paraiyan was known as Pulaiyan in the Śaṅgam age. References to Pulaiyan are found in the Puranānūru: 217 : I and 562:39, as well as in the Kalittogai 68 : 18. In these contexts he is not only associated with drumming but also with several menial kinds of work. It seems that the genesis of the word Paraiyan is traceable to drumming; but that as a comprehensive term denoting the large scheduled class of the present, it came to be adopted only much later. The view that Pulaiya denoted the Paraiyan also seems acceptable. It may be noted that at present the Paraiyans are found throughout the Tamil country whereas the Pulaiyans denote a particular scheduled caste in Kerala.

In the inscriptions of Rāja Rāja I, this caste has been mentioned under the name ‘Paṇaiyan.’ In recent times several subsects have arisen among the Paṇaiyar, like Śāmbān, Śāngīdian, Śōliya, Kōṅga, Moraśu, Kilakkattai, Kattī and Valaṅgmattu.

There is a belief not only among the Paṇaiyar, but among others as well that they occupied in the past a much higher position than at present. Some of the privileges which they enjoyed for long seem to have been gained from the people of the higher castes. The lower but important village officers like Tallayāri, Tōtti and Veṭṭiyān have been generally held by the Paṇaiyar.

According to a legend the Paṇaiyans trace their descent to a Brāhmaṇin, who was cursed by Śiva to be considered a Paṇiah for concealing a part of the meat intended to be offered to Lord Śiva in order to be given to his wife. Paṇaiyas wear a sacred thread in the course of their marriages and funerals; perhaps this is in pursuance of their legendary association with the Brāhmaṇin priest. It is notable that the Brāhmaṇins belonged to the Right Hand caste.

In early times the Paraiyas were drummers and labourers. They served as grave-diggers, watchmen and scavengers. But some Paṇaiyas took to weaving, and a large number of them became agricultural labourers and domestic servants. The Valluvar act as the priests of the Paṇaiyar. The Valluvar considered themselves to be of a caste superior to that of the Paṇaiyar; they did not eat or intermarry with the Paṇaiyar.

The Paṇaiyar were usually Śaivas; but they were in fact demon worshippers. They worshipped not only several village gods and goddesses but they offered prayers to

ghosts and goblins. In the period after 16th century many Paraiyas were converted to Christianity.

Polygamy is in vogue among the Paraiyar. Besides the legally wedded wife, the Paraiyan invariably had another woman who also served as the lady of the house. This led to frequent bickerings within the family. However, apart from this restricted bigamy, polygamy as such, is not adopted among the Paraiyar. Widow remarriage is common; though there is no formal ceremony in all cases.

*Ambattan* : Ambat̄tan is the name of the barber, through the ages. He was also known as Navidan (Pašamoļi : 284 : 3. In later times he came to be known as Pariyāri, Kudimagan and Panditan. The barber in due course became a musician, particularly a player on the pipe. Quite often he was a medicine man, having a knowledge of the Āyurveda system of medicine. The Ambattan women have been for ages the midwives in the Tamil country.

There is a tradition that the Ambattans are the descendants of the offspring of a Vaiśya woman by a Brāhmin.

It is interesting to find that Manu has accorded a curiously high position to the Ambattan. According to him Brāhmins may eat food prepared by a barber within the precincts of a temple. It is remarkable that the high priests in the great temple of Jagannāth is a barber.

There are both śaivites and vaishṇavites among Ambattans; but the majority are śaivites. The vaishṇavites are always vegetarians and teetotallers. However, the vaishṇavites and śaivites among the Ambattans intermarry. Widow remarriage is prohibited among the Ambattans.

The Ambattans belong to the Right Hand group of castes and do not eat with the Kōmatiś and Kammālans or food given by the Kōmatiś or Kammālans, both of

whom belong to the Left. However, they have no objection to shave Kōmaṭis or Kammāḷans.

**Kammāḷar**; An interesting community is that of the Kammāḷar or smith. There is a legend that they are a product of a mixed marriage. The Kammāḷar call themselves Viśvakarmas (supposed to be descended from Viśvakarma, the architect among Gods) and believe that they are even superior to Brāhmaṇins. They call themselves Āchāris and Pāṭṭars and they claim a knowledge of the Vēdas. Most of the Kammāḷas are vegetarians.

In the Śaṅgam age, the Kammāḷar were known as Kammiyar and we find references to them in some of the Śaṅgam classics. For example, the Kammāḷar are mentioned as goldsmiths in Narrinai : 94 : 4, 313 : 2, 363 : 4, in Neḍunalvāḍai 87 and Puranānūru 353 : 1, as coppersmiths in Narrinai 153 : 2. It may be noted that the Maduraikkāñchi (521) speaks of them as weavers. Later, the Nānmaṇikkadigai (41 ; 1) refers to them as goldsmiths, carpenters and image makers. From early times they have been the leading custodians and promoters of the fine arts like architecture, sculpture and iconography.

In the Chōla period, the Kammāḷar were not only goldsmiths and carpenters, but were also stone masons of high calibre. It is learnt from inscriptions at Kasuvūr and Pērūr that they were granted certain privileges by some Chōla monarchs; but the name of the monarch is not known. The privileges were: the blowing of two conches, the beating of drums etc., Among other privileges granted were the construction of houses with two storeys and with double doors, the right to decorate the front of their houses with garlands of water liles and so on.

The kammaḷas were well organized. The five divisions among them were goldsmiths (Tattān), brass-smiths (Kannān),

carpenter (Tachchan), stone mason (kal tachchan) and blacksmith (Kollan or Karumān). The goldsmiths do not intermarry with the Kollan or Karumān; among the rest there is free intermarriage.

They wear the holy thread. From the age of the Imperial Chōlas the Kammālar were members of the Left Hand caste. There are several stories regarding their origin and early position. However, conflicts between Kammālar and people of the Right hand castes were bitter. In Kāñchipuram as well as in other towns of Tamil Nādu there were Right Hand and Left Hand temples, Maṇḍapas and dancing girls. The Left Hand people like the Kammālas, refrained from any association with the Right Hand counterparts. With the end of the 19th century violent ruptures between the Left Hand Castes like those of the Kammālas and the Right Hand Castes were common.

Only a few typical castes are considered here. There were numerous sub divisions among each of them. Always legends were created speaking of the glorious origin of each of the castes. There has been a tendency on the part of all castes to hold aloft high traditions and an eagerness to ascend in social status.

## SECTION VI

### THE RIGHT HAND AND LEFT HAND CASTES

A peculiar development of the caste system which affected the social history of Tamils and of the Kannadigas in a limited measure was the rise of the division of many castes into one or the other of the Right and Left hand castes. It was believed that each one of these two divisions had within its fold 98 castes. But it is not possible to determine the exact identity of the different castes included in the Right Hand category. The castes of the Left Hand are mentioned in an inscription at Āduturai.<sup>39</sup> The principal castes in the Right Hand group are known through institutions and traditions. Thus, for example, the Right hand castes included the Paṇaiyar and Chetties. The prominent castes included in the Left Hand group were those of the Kammālas and Pallas. In later accounts the Valaṅgai and Idāṅgai castes are said to have formed sub divisions of the 18 major castes. The names of these 18 castes are not known definitely. Generally the Brāhmins and Vellālas did not range themselves under either of the Right or Left Hand castes.

The genesis of the division into Right and Left Hand castes is one of the riddles of South Indian history. There are no, doubt, various legends which ascribe the origin of this peculiar social division to one or other circumstance.

One held that, as desired by an early Chōla king Arindama, a holy sacrifice was conducted by the sage Kāśyapa and his assistants. In the conduct of that sacrifice the people of certain castes actively helped the sage. After the sacrifice was completed, the sage and their followers were safely conducted

to a new colony in which they were to be settled. In this actual settlement of the saintly persons also, the people of those castes who helped them in the conduct of the sacrifices cooperated actively. They accompanied the sages carrying their umbrellas and slippers. When the sages alighted from their chariots the members of the non-brāhmaṇi castes who had cooperated with them all along stood on the left side of the chariots and helped them to alight from the chariots. The people of those castes came to be designated as those of the left hand castes; the other non-brāhmaṇi castes were known as members of the right hand castes.

The sages bestowed on the people of the left hand castes certain privileges like the use of the horn, conch and bugle. They were also authorised to have as their symbols the feather of the crane and the loose-hanging human hair. This story about the origin and early history of the Left Hand castes is found in inscriptions discovered about the 12th century A.D. during the Chōla king, Kulōttunga III. It is obvious that the entire account is incredible and that it is a later invention of some members of the Left Hand castes in order to assume an exalted status for themselves. A later inscription found at Āduturai records that the number of Left Hand castes was 91.

Another legend was set afloat by certain Kammālas. It may be noted that the Kammālar were the foremost among the Left Hand castes and that they claimed a social rank next only to that of the Brāhmīns. In fact at one stage there was acute rivalry between the Kammālas and Brāhmīns.<sup>40</sup> According to this legend the Kammālas were occupying a lofty position and they were the hereditary priests of the Chōlas from early times. Vēda Vyāsa became jealous

of their position and killed the Chōla king, Parimāla, in order to expel the Kammālas from power and installed Parimāla's son as his successor. The new king was to expel the Kammālas who had so far considered themselves as Brāhmins and claimed that they were the proud possessors of the Fifth Vēda which was exclusively applicable to them. Now Vēda Vyāsa, killing Parimāla, destroyed the Fifth Vēda.

This is also an incredible legend which aimed at according a lofty origin and status to the Kammālas, the chief among the Left Hand caste people. They boasted that they were originally the descendants of Viśvakarma, the divine architect and though they pursued the occupation of the goldsmiths, coppersmiths and so on, they held fast to their legendary tradition.

Another story upholding the honoured position of the Kammālas was invented in the 11th century A.D. by the favoured caste who were accorded a place on the left side of the goddess Kāli. In the town of Kāñchipuram there were built separate halls for the Left and Right hand groups for offering worship in the Kamākshi temple at Kāñchipuram. The Kammālas of Kāñchipuram put forward in A.D. 1008 in proof of their high position certain copper plates which mentioned the special privileges to be enjoyed by the Kammālas. It is not known when these Plates were forged; but since they refer to a date corresponding to A.D. 1098 it may be conjectured that the appearance of the social division of Right and Left Hand castes had emerged about the 11th century A.D.

While the above-mentioned legends were invented in order to ennable the history of the Left Hand castes there

has appeared one which gives a high position to the Right Hand castes. It is found embodied in a manuscript entitled 'Valaṅgai Jāti Varalāru' or the history of the Valaṅgai castes. The manuscript is available in the Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras. It states that when the Pāṇḍyas and Chōḷas had become enfeebled in Tamil Nādu, one Paraiyan Nandan by name, usurped the power and became the ruler in the northern part of Tamil Nādu. In order to bestow upon himself a high social status he wanted to marry a girl of the Vellāla caste. When this proposal was made to the leaders among the Vellālas, they could not openly refuse it. Therefore, they had recourse to a strategem with the connivance of the Kammālas of the place. The idea was to erect a pavilion of stone where the marriage ceremony was to be conducted and at the time of the wedding it should be so contrived that the pavilion falls on the bride and bridegroom. The stratagem was executed according to plan, and Nandan, the Pariah king, was killed. The surviving Pariahs of the locality were either driven out or enslaved by the Vellālas. The Pariahs attributed their miserable fate to the crafty strategem adopted by the Kammālas and therefore there arose an undying hostility between these two communities. The Pariahs were of the Right Hand Caste and the Kammālas were of the Left Hand Caste. On account of their renewed hostility the Pariahs prevented the Kammālas from adopting any of their privileges like having white flags with the figure of a lion, swan, Hanuman and the plough. On the other hand, the Kammālas denied the Pariahs the privileges of having white, green or flowery umbrellas and of having torches during day time.

This story is different from the others of its kind in so far as it does not specify the rise of the two divisions, the Right Hand and Left Hand castes. Further, the real

opponents according to this story are the Pariahs and Vellālas and not the Pariahs and Kammālar. The artificial nature of the story is evident from giving a prominence to the part played by the Kammālas.

Again, the story of the ruler of a lower caste trying to marry into a higher caste and erection of a stone pavilion and its ultimate collapse through the stratagem of the Kammālas is told of several communities in Tamilaham. For example, the story of Nallataṅgāl, current from time immemorial and of the Nāñchikkuravān episode in Nāñchinād may be mentioned in this connection. The stories are absolutely incredible.

Another tradition is that the Chōla emperor Kulōttunga III grew vexed with the disputes between the Vellālar and Kammālar in his dominion and asked them to appear before him in order that he might settle their dispute. It is stated that they came and that the Kammālar arrayed themselves on the left of the king and the Vellālar on the right. The king decided in favour of the superiority of the status of the Vellālas and they all went back to their places of residence. From that time onwards the Kammālas were called members of the Left Hand Caste and the Vellālas as of the Right Hand. This story is told of other castes as well, and it is not possible to vouchsafe the credibility of the tradition. Moreover, it is generally believed that the Vellālas, like Brāhmins, were outside the pale of the division. How then can this story be accepted as true?

Another story is also current which seeks to explain the assignment of the Kammālas to the Left Hand group. It appears that a Kammālan's wife was unjustly killed by a king of Kāñchipuram. The Kammaḷa had two sons, one

by his Kammāla wife and another by a Balija wife. The two sons of the Kammāla wreaked their vengeance on the king and killed him. When, however, it came to a division of the dead king's belongings between the two brothers, all the other castes participated and joined with one or the other of the Kammāla and Balija brothers. Those with the Kammāla brother were considered the members of the Left Hand caste and the others all of the Right Hand castes. In Kāñchipuram as well as in other towns of Tamil Nādu there were Right Hand and Left Hand temples, Maṇḍapas, and Dancing girls. The Left Hand people like Kammālas refrained from any association with their Right Hand counterparts. Disputes were common, and frequently unruly riots followed. Till the 19th century violent ruptures between the Right Hand and Left Hand factions were common. It is interesting to note that according to a legend the Kammālas were actively associated with the origin of the Right Hand-Left Hand faction. But it is not known how far this tradition is historically reliable.

A semi-historical account of the division of the Right Hand and Left Hand castes is found in the *Chōla Pūrvapattiyam*, a copy of which is found in the Oriental Manuscripts Library at Madras. According to this, Karikāla Chōla, the king brought many Velliālas, Cheṭṭis and Kaikkōlas from the overpopulated regions to other places like the Koṅgu country. This Karikāla might be taken as identical with Kulōttunga III, for that was one of his alternative names. An inscription of the 16th year of Kulottunga III as well as other inscriptions found at Kāñchi<sup>41</sup> show that this ruler proceeded from Karūr to Koṅgu in order to reorganize society there. In all probability he grouped the people on the basis of the Valaṅgai and Idāṅgai divisions. But, even so, these inscriptions do not furnish any indication of the origin of these two groups.

Apart from legends and semi-historical compositions there have been certain guesses advanced by some writers. T. N. Ellis, for instance, suggested<sup>42</sup> that the basic factor which accounted for the rise of the division of castes into Right Hand and Left Hand ones was based upon the age-long rivalry between the old agricultural population and the new industrial and manufacturing classes. The landowners and agriculturists constituted the Right Hand castes, while the manufacturers, industrialists and traders formed the Left Hand castes.

But there are certain obvious difficulties in accepting this explanation. It is well known that all the agriculturists were not included in the Right Hand group. For instance, the Pallis and Palas who were agriculturists were included among the Left Hand castes. Again, the Valaṅgai (Right Hand) castes did not consist only of agriculturists and landowners. For instance, the Kōmaṭṭi Chēṭṭis and Bēri Chēṭṭis who were mainly traders came under the category of Right Hand castes.

Further, the division into Right and Left Hand castes seems to have appeared before the 11th century A.D., whereas the importation of industrialists is said to have taken place only in the 13th century. Further, it is not known who the new industrialists and manufacturers were that entered Tamilaham in the 13th century which led to the division of the people into the two categories. No doubt, some came on the wake of the Vijayanagar conquerors, but that was much later.

Another suggestion is that made by Gustav Oppert. He supports the view of Ellis and adds that the industrialists and manufacturers who entered southern India were mostly Jains, whereas the agriculturists were Hindus. Therefore, the religious factor is also imported in order to explain the social phenomenon. But this view too, is unacceptable. The Jains were in Karnataka and Tamil Nādu very much earlier than the 11th century A.D. Further, the suggestion of Gustav Oppert

ignores the identity of the castes included in the Left Hand group. For instance, the Pallis and the Pallas grouped under the Left Hand castes were not Jains. The Kammālar were a prominent group of the Left Hand category and they could by no means be considered Jains. On the other hand, there were some in the Right Hand group who were Jains.

Yet another piece of guess is the one advanced by M. Srinivasa Iyengar. He thinks that the division of the people into the Right Hand and Left Hand castes originated in the Chōla country about A.D. 1010. His diagnosis of the causes which led to this distinction is that political, social and religious factors were responsible for it. The hostility between the Chōlas and the neighbouring kings was the political cause. The desire on the part of certain low castes to secure some privileges enjoyed by the higher classes was the social cause. He thinks that this bifurcation into the Right Hand and Left Hand castes was stimulated by the anti-Brāhmanical views of Basava. But surely this is unacceptable, because Basava appeared considerably later than the time of the origin of the Right and Left Hand castes. Moreover, there is no evidence that Basava's teachings influenced the Tamil country. Finally, M. Srinivasa Iyengar states that the hostility between the Jains and Hindus was another cause. But it is difficult to understand how this could have accounted for the rise of the two categories of caste. Moreover, the Jains had become considerably weakened in the Tamil country after the 7th century A.D.

In the consideration of the Right and Left Hand castes, it is significant to note, as observed earlier, that while the men of the Chakkiliya caste were included in the Idāngai group, the women of the same caste were considered as belonging to the Right Hand category. The Chakkiliya women

denied their husbands even conjugal rights till the fighting was over.<sup>43</sup> Similarly the men of the Palli caste were of the Left Hand section, while their women were of the Right Hand. These indicate that the division was artificial.

Though the real cause of the emergence of this artificial division of castes is not indubitably known, it is likely that one circumstance was responsible for its emergence. This was the recruitment of soldiers to the army by the Imperial Chōlas. Traditionally men of certain castes were enrolled in the army. When later, the numerical strength of the fighting forces had to be increased, men of other castes also were admitted. The members of the traditional fighting castes came to be described as those of the Right and Left Hand castes, while those of the new recruits were known as the Left Hand castes. In this connection attention may be drawn to the fact that 14 Valaṅgai regiments of the Chōlas were described as 'Valaṅgai Paṭam Paḍaiga[.]<sup>44</sup> This suggests that there were new regiments which were considered to belong to the Idāṅgai. This is reinforced by the known fact that under the Imperial Chōlas, Rājarāja I and Rājēndra I, the soldiers recruited from the vanquished powers were described as those of the Left Hand castes. Thus the Bedars of the Canarese country, the Pallans of the Pāṇḍyan kingdom, the Bedars, Madigar and the Chakkiliyans of the Kaliṅga region were, after their recruitment to the Chōla army, considered as members of the Left Hand castes. As another example of the new immigrants having been assigned to the Left Hand caste, mention may be made of the people who migrated to and settled down in Paraśurāma Perunteruvu at Idalakkudi, near Nagercoil. Though they were not soldiers, they were outsiders. When they came to their new habitat, the Brāhmins and Velliālas of the place assigned them to the Left Hand caste and were denied the right of temple entry. Again,

the Ilavas and Tiyas who came from Śrī Laṅka were treated as members of the Left Hand caste. In this connection it may be noted that there is a traditional saying that the Paraiyar of the Tamil country were not members of the Left Hand castes, but were Tamilar. This indicates that Idāngaiyar were foreigners in the Tamil country. It is significant that the original and indigenous soldiers like the Vēdan, Nattaman and Pariah castes were described as Vēlaikkārar, meaning soldiers.<sup>45</sup>

The connection between the designations of the army in terms of the Valaṅgai and Idāngai is evident from certain designations occurring in the Chōla period. Thus in the time of the Imperial Chōlas there was a regiment of soldiers known as ‘Mūnrukaipadainar.’<sup>46</sup> More or less the same designation appears in another context. An inscription states that in the reign of Kulōttunga I the protection of the property of Chēran Mahādēvi Bhaktavatsalam temple was entrusted to ‘Mūnrām Padaiynar.’<sup>47</sup> The ‘Mūnrukaippadainar’ or ‘Mūnrukai Mahāsēnai’ were otherwise known as ‘Mūnrukai Vēlaikkārar.’ They denote obviously the army of the three divisions (kai).

In course of time, the division into Right and Left Hand castes spread among the various castes. But, as mentioned earlier, the Brāhmins and Vellālas were generally considered to be outside the pale of this division; but in the time of the Imperial Chōlas they also took sides occasionally.

Between the people of the Right Hand and Left Hand castes there were frequent disputes. These disputes figured prominently from the 11th to 18th century A.D., and in particular from the 14th to the end of the 18th century. The earliest dispute about which we have epigraphic information is that of 1080 A.D.<sup>48</sup>, or perhaps that of 1072

A.D., at Rājamahēndrachaturvēdimāngalam in the Tanjavur District.<sup>49</sup>

Frequently the disputes between the two classes arose on flimsy grounds. As a consequence of these feuds often bloodshed and confusion followed. Conflicts arose frequently on the exercise of social privileges and honours. For example, a conflict arose in the 14th century between the Valāngai and Idāngai groups near Pondicherry over certain privileges like the use of white umbrellas, white horses etc. Once a dispute arose simply fact that a chuckler (chakkiliya) had dared to appear at a public from the ceremony with red flowers stuck in his turban, a privilege which the Parīahs alleged to belong exclusively to the Right Hand faction (Dubois : 3rd edition, p. 27). The disputes are too many in number to be recorded. Conflicts between Pallas and Paraiyas were frequent. The Kammālas, as prominent among the Left Hand castes, were also involved in many disputes.

The tension between the Right Hand and Left Hand castes in the region of Tanjavur reached its height about A.D. 1440. This is learnt from an inscription<sup>50</sup> which speaks of a settlement between the two sections in Markal Nādu on the northern bank of the Kāvēri. An agreement was eventually reached on the question of the various privileges to be enjoyed by the two sections. Taylor states that in 1438-39 an understanding among the various communities was arrived at, to the effect that if either the Right Hand or Left Hand section caused any trouble during public fesirvities, the said persons should forthwith be killed on the spot with spears without ceremony."<sup>51</sup>

An interesting conflict occurred in A.D. 1700 between the barbers and the Chettis. The dispute arose out of the

right of wearing jasmine in their hair by barbers. The Chettis objected to it. On one occasion when the barbers were going round the tank near the temple of Channigarāya of Bhūtamhalli wearing jasmine flowers in their hairs, one Chetti rushed and plucked away the flowers since they had no right to wear them. The barbers appealed to the Pañchāyat which agreed to consult the concerned inscription in the Nisakambha temple at Kāñchi. It was found that the inscription has laid down that the right of wearing jasmine as also riding on horseback belonged to the Chettis and not to the barbers who were entitled to use only red ganagel flowers. The barbers decided to abide by the findings of the inscription.

The right to ride in a palanquin or horseback on the day of marriage and to have trumpet sounded before the bridegroom or having a flag of particular colour accompanied by music at public ceremonies were causes of serious conflicts. The Right Hand group insisted on priority in the distribution of *pānsupāri* and sandal at marriages and other social functions. The Right Hand castes had the privilege of employing Paraiya musicians with pipes and horns while the Left Hand castes could employ only Chakklis and drum beaters on important occasions.

Often, however, the two groups came to some understanding for the purpose of achieving certain common objects. For instance, an inscription of A.D. 1428 records<sup>52</sup> an agreement between the Valangai and Idangai castes that they should not pay the taxes due to the king because they were oppressed by the royal officials as well as the landowners. We are not aware of the results of this no-tax campaign. Probably the king reprimanded his officials and appeased the Right and Left Hand castes.

Again, another inscription of A.D. 1429<sup>53</sup> states that the Valaṅgai and Idaṅgai people assembled at a meeting in the temple and revised the dues to be collected from the tenants who had been oppressed by the government officials and the landlords.

In fact the taxes were heavy and both the Valaṅgai and Idaṅgai castes often united to bring down the taxes and even threatened to migrate to other places. A Vijayanagar inscription of A.D. 1446<sup>54</sup> confirms it. The king was obliged to reduce the taxes and recall the people.

In the relationship between the Right and Left Hand castes the Kammāḷas occupy a unique position. At times they claimed a position of equality with the Brāhmins; they held that they were their own priests. The matter was taken to the court of law in 1814 and the Kammāḷas won a decree in their favour; the Kammāḷas could conduct marriages among the community with their own priests. The goldsmiths had special privileges like having double conches blown, drums beaten on auspicious occasions and to put on shoes while going on a journey and to whitewash their houses.<sup>55</sup>

The Kammāḷas were worshippers of Kāļi and it has been suggested that they were descendants of the pre-Dravidian or aboriginal Nāga tribes. From times of yore, however, they had adopted the practice of burying the dead.

One inexplicable fact is that in Mysore the Kammāļar were considered to belong to the Right Hand caste. In Kerala where the Right and Left Hand castes had not appeared some of the Kammāļar were treated as untouchables.

Thus the history of the Right Hand and Left Hand castes is interesting. The rivalry among the castes was

strong between the 11th and the end of the 18th century. There was a dispute in the city of Madras as late as 1809. Gradually the rancour between the two groups disappeared. Beauchamp, the editor of the third edition of 'Hindu Manners and Customs and Ceremonies' by Abbe Dubois, says that 'these faction fights have gradually disappeared under the civilizing influences of education and good government.'<sup>56</sup> He adds however that the distinctions between the two factions still exist in the outskirts of villages. It is surprising that the division into Right and Left Hand castes existed even among the upper caste Christian converts. At Pondicherry it is considered that the Sacred Heart Church belonged to the Paraiyahs and therefore were looked down upon by certain Christians, because the latter belonged to the Left Hand group. In Karaikkal, too, there were frequent disputes between the Right and Left Hand castes even in the 19th century. In 1828, for instance, an uprising took place at Karaikkal when the Kammālans were permitted by the Government to wear sandals.

## SECTION V

### CASTE GOVERNMENT

Matters concerning castes were regulated by caste councils. Often each sub-caste had a council of its own. The caste pañchāyats, as these councils were called, kept a close watch on the activities, of the individuals and regulated them. The village pañchāyats originated from the caste pañchāyats. Thus it was caste which was responsible for the development of an autonomous village organization with the pañchāyat as the pivot of its body politic. The caste councils exercised a strong influence on the pañchāyats of the village also.

The vast majority of caste matters were disposed of by the caste councils which exercised the final powers of expulsion from and restoration to caste as well as imposing fines and other penalties for less serious breaches of custom.

The caste council or caste pañchāyat can act only for a limited area. Pañchāyat literally denoted a body of five men, but in practice, it is usually very much larger in strength. The officials who perform its executive functions, as well as sharing its judicial ones, may be appointed *ad hoc* or for a particular period or they may be hereditary. It has frequently been observed that the lower the caste in the social scale, the stronger its combination and the more efficient its organization.

The caste councils of the lower castes in the south are generally well organized. Among the Iluvans of Tirunelveli, for instance, each village had its own council which controlled a union of villages. Each group of them, five to seven

Union Councils, elected five members of the divisional council which regulated the affairs of the caste throughout the nādu or the large division of the country. The Panikkans in Tamil Nādu, likewise, had a similar, though not an identical system.

The headman of a caste council often had privileges or insignia which suggests that the position was derived in some cases from that of the chief of a tribe. In one section of the Vellālas of Tirunelveli, he had a seat on a dais, while every one else stands, and was addressed 'Irunkōl,' meaning 'please take your seat.' The powers of the headmen varied from place to place. But generally in the south, the 'headman is like a chief with practically absolute power,' according to O' Malley, and he has mentioned the Maṇavans caste as an instance.

In some castes, the headman enjoyed certain privileges. In one caste he was given a gold ring to wear and was humbly saluted with folded hands in the form of obeisance. In another caste he had the right to ride on horseback and to use an umbrella, before which any man of the caste coming before him prostrated himself.

The position of the headman was not only one of honour, but also of considerable authority. As a rule he did not act independently of the council, except in petty cases; but a man of wealth and influence might sometimes acquire a monopoly of power and acted like a dictator without the assistance or concurrence of any council. In some parts of Tamil Nādu and among some castes, the headman was like a chief with practically absolute power. Such is the case among the Maṇavans of Tamil Nādu, whose headman, besides deciding on cases of breaches of caste rules, had a peculiar duty due to the fact that the Maṇavans are a caste with

**riminal propensities.** From them the village watchmen are drawn, on the principle either of setting a thief to catch a thief or of employing one as security against the misconduct of his fellows. The watchman's task was not merely to detect thefts but to prevent them; and if a theft occurred, the Maravans of the village had to make good the loss. Their headman then acted as an arbiter, for he apportioned the amount to be paid by each family as compensation to the victims of the theft. The system did not work too well, for in order to compensate one householder the watchman himself committed theft of another's property or he gave a promissory note which he had no intention of redeeming.

The matters which came before the caste council were for the most part offences connected with marriage and morals, food and drink. The caste councils further dealt with religious offences, such as the omission of performance of rites at ceremonies like marriages and funerals and killing or causing the death of sacred animals and birds.

Generally speaking, the offences of which a caste pāñchāyat took cognizance were, of the following kinds; (1) Offences against the commensal taboos which prevent members of the caste from eating, drinking or smoking with members of another caste (2) Offences involving sex or breaches of the marriage rules of the caste, widow remarriages in the case of castes which do not permit them and (3) Grave offences against widely accepted precepts of Hinduism, such as insulting a Brahmin or killing a cow, beating a man with shoe etc.

Not every little matter comes before the caste councils. The headman and elders often settle disputes out of court, effect compromises and reprimand petty offenders without the formality of a trial. The procedure observed in cases tried by caste pāñchāyats was extremely simple, informal and

untrammelled by the law of evidence. Evidence before a caste pañchāyat was frequently given on oath, and for Hindu oaths, Ganges water or the sacred *tulasi* plant or holding a cow's tail were commonly adopted.

The procedure adopted in trying the charges against an accused person was simple. After the charge was stated, the accused was questioned. If he admitted his guilt, sentence followed. If he denied the charges, witnesses were heard in support of the accusation and in defence of the accused after which came the verdict.

In backward areas sometimes trial by ordeal was adopted. The accused was required to put a hand into boiling oil or to carry in his hand a piece of red hot metal.

The punishments decreed by the Caste council were often serious. The offender was outcasted or fined or subjected to corporal punishment; sometimes he was kicked by every member of the council; at others he was bound hand and foot or tied up in a mat for some hours.

The most familiar punishment imposed by caste pañchāyats was that which deprived a casteman of the right to receive water or the tobacco pipe from the hands of his caste fellowmen, or forbade them likewise to receive it from him. He was debarred from having the services of the Brahmins who conducted ceremonies for his caste, nor of the barbers who shaved its members nor of the washerman who washed their clothes, and if he died under the ban his corpse would be denied formal funeral rites. An excommunication of this sort may be for a temporary period or for an indefinite time, depending on the case and the judgement. Other forms of punishment are the exaction of fines or feasts to the caste or to Brahmins. Still other penalties might be corporal punishment or the performance of a pilgrimage or the collection of a fine by begging.

Many penalties imposed were intended to humiliate the culprit excessively e. g. corporal punishment might be given with a shoe for the sake of humiliating the offender. The person responsible for the death of a cow often had to make a pilgrimage with a cow's tail tied to his staff or beg for his living for a period in the same manner, or accompanied by a cow the tail of which he holds or he might have to bellow (howl) like an ox at the same time or even to wear the dead animal's hide, horns and hoofs, or have a rope round his neck and straw in the mouth. Shaving the culprit on one side of his head and face and leaving the other adorned with hair was another form of humiliation, or the victim is paraded on a donkey with one side of his face blacked and the other whitened. In other cases he might be compelled to wear a string of old shoes round his neck, while an unchaste woman might have to walk round the village with a basket of mud on her head or with a grindstone hung round her neck. O'Malley mentions as a punishment making a man stand on one leg in the sun with a pitcher of water balanced on the head.

The culprit was compelled to ride on a donkey with one half of his face coated with lime and the other half smeared with tar. A milder punishment was to make a man stand for a certain length of time in the sun with pitcher full of water posed on his head, sometimes to make him stand on one leg with the pitcher of water or he might have the heavy mortar which is used for pounding rice hung from his neck. Women might be punished for sexual misconduct by having to walk round the village with a grinding stone round their necks.

Punishments imposed by some castes in the Tamil Nādu were extraordinary. Among the Valaiyans an unchaste woman had to carry a basket of mud round the village, and men

who were habitual offenders against morality were forced to sit on the ground with their toes tied to their necks. In some cases the offenders were out-casted; then, after proper expiation, they were readmitted.

In some cases (not only in North India, but in South India as well) bathing in the Ganges or even swallowing some of its sand (or mud) very often formed part of a penalty imposed, as did drinking water into which a Brāhmaṇ had dipped his toe. Here the element of purification was clearly present. Blunt (in his Caste System) records some two dozen varied punishments, specific cases (in North India) inflicted by the Pañchāyats of various castes.

For expiation, a simple method was taking *pañchagavya*, the five products of the cow, a mixture of milk, curd, ghee, cowdung and cow's urine. Sometimes the purification was very elaborate. Among the *Urāli* of Tiruchirappalli if a man had seduced a girl of the caste, they had to be married and they and their relatives purified by bathing in 108 different pools of water, by walking over a hundred heads of sheep with the blood of which they were smeared, by further bathing, by drinking a cow's urine, by bathing again and finally by feasting the pañchāyat. Among the Uppiliyans of Tiruchirappalli an offender called 'the man of two lights' had to eat a meal in the polluted house with his hands tied behind his back.

Purification and expiation were followed by the readmission to ordinary communion of the erring casteman, but expulsion for life might be the penalty for heinous offence. In Kerala, if a Nambūdiri woman committed adultery, she was outcasted and a funeral ceremony was performed for her as if she were dead; if a husband takes back an erring

wife or a father receives home an erring daughter, they, too, were liable to be outcasted.

*Caste government:* There is a saying in North India meaning ‘the caste is its own ruler.’ It is based on fact, for, each caste was a self-governing community. It regulated its affairs and enforced its unwritten law independently of others and generally enjoyed freedom from outside control including that of Brāhmīns.

The caste was the custodian of its own laws. It punishes those who offended against them. For the purposes of self-government, the lower castes were far better organized than the higher, which rarely have any machinery for the regulation of their affairs. The lower castes on the other hand have, as a rule, a very effective organization for making and enforcing their decrees. Caste government among them was implemented by governing bodies and headmen to whom authority was delegated.

*Caste Councils:* The constitution of the governing body varied. Sometimes it was a general assembly of the adult members of the caste. Sometimes it was a council, composed of heads of houses or of representatives of families, who held office by hereditary right or by appointment for life; in the latter case, the members of the caste elected members to vacancies as they occurred. A special council might be constituted *ad hoc* for the settlement of some particular question or the adjudication of a special case after the decision of which its powers lapsed.

The commonest kind of caste council was that which consisted of the elder men of the caste. This formed a kind of standing committee under the presidentship of a headman. In the field of offenders against caste rules its

members acted like a jury with the headman as a presiding judge; in matters of common interest to the caste it was like the directorate of a company. It tended to promote discipline among its members; but for matters of grave and general importance, it might give place to a general assembly of the male members of the caste; even then the members of the council guide the discussion and have a large voice in the final decision.

The governing body was generally known as a *pañchāyat*, however, there is no fixation of members to five; the name *pañchāyat* is only a traditional one. There is a popular saying which means 'The voice of the *pañchāyat* is the voice of God'.

It must not be imagined that a whole caste was governed by one council. On the contrary, there were different councils for different sections of a caste, because only those who could intermarry could have a common council.

Questions of marriage customs and breaches of the marriage law were the most important matters coming within the purview of the caste council; and each sub-caste administered its own marriage law. Communal feasts were a common feature of caste government; when a general meeting was held, a feast was the finale.

Besides sub-caste meetings there were general caste meetings and different caste councils also occasionally combined when there was any grave matter of interest to decide upon.

Not uncommonly also there was a regular gradation of caste councils, those constituted for a small area being subordinate to others which controlled a large area. When

this was the case, there was often a well-defined representative system, the superior councils being elected by those below them and settling questions beyond the competence of the latter. Among the Ilavans of Tirunelveli each village had its own council and elected two representatives to a council which controlled a union of villages. Each group of five to seven union councils elected five members to a divisional council, which exercised authority over the nādu. In the same way among the Panikkans of (Madras) Tamil Nādu eleven villages formed a union, on the council of which each village had a representative, and eleven unions formed a *nādu* and elected the members of its council.

The Executive consisted of two or three office-bearers. By far the most important was the headman, who presided at meetings of the caste council and had the authority which his designation implied. Next in rank was a man who presided over meetings in the absence of the headman. The third functionary was a subordinate, a kind of beadle (**தண்டல்காரன்**) who acted as the headman's messenger, summoned meetings and collected the fines imposed by the Council. In some cases these offices were held for life, and when an incumbent died, the men of the caste elected his successor. More generally they were hereditary; if one of them devolved on a minor or a totally incompetent person, another member of his family might act in his place.

As with the councils, so with the headman, there were in some areas and among some castes gradations of jurisdiction. In the Tiruchirappalli District, for example, there were superior headmen who had authority over a number of groups of villages, each of which had its own headman. They acted as an appellate or revisional authority, if the local councils were unable to come to a decision, or if their decisions were disputed.

The Councils themselves did a good deal of non-judicial work. They arranged for the partition of property among members of families which had decided to separate, enforced both the fulfilment of promises of marriage and the restoration of runaway wives and determined the maintenance to be given to divorced women; the last was a rare contingency.

There is no doubt that the caste councils exercised a close control over the members of their community and kept up a fair measure of strict discipline. Relations with the suspects in morals were at once cut off, and they were boycotted until they cleared themselves out of the charges. This was specially the case in the villages and among the lower castes. The lower the caste, the stricter it was in enforcing caste rules and preserving the honour of the caste.

It has been observed that in India the spirit of combination is always in the inverse ratio to the rank of a class, weakest in the highest and strongest in the lowest class. This is certainly true of the Tamil castes; the high castes seldom have any organization such as is found among the lower castes. There is rarely any one with authority to take the initiative in case of complaints or any governing body to take offenders to task or try them and pass judgment on them.

*Decline of the authority of the Caste Councils:* The regulation of the affairs of caste by councils is almost a thing of the past. The law courts have had a considerable influence on the system of caste government. This influence has greatly increased by now.

Moreover, during the past few centuries, men of wealth and position have been often able to defy those who sought to ostracize them. They enlisted friends and sympathizers and a caste was not infrequently split by faction as in a

case<sup>57</sup> in which a man, who had been excommunicated for a voyage overseas, gathered a party round him and formed a society which excommunicated his excommunicators.

Moreover, with the advance of Western education a spirit of defiance of the age-old regulations of caste appeared. The highly educated members of the high castes themselves appreciate the liberty which they enjoy by not being in tutelage to any central authority. At a Conference which one advanced community held in Bombay some decades ago, a proposal to revive caste pañchāyats or councils met with determined opposition. It was maintained that individual liberty and scope for development were essential to progress and the revival of the authority of the councils was denounced as the greatest of evils.<sup>58</sup>

Now in towns and cities practically caste councils have ceased to exist. Even in villages there is no regular session of caste councils. In the event of any extraordinary occurrence a caste council or village pañchāyat may be summoned to offer solutions for the difficult problem that arises.

## SECTION VI

### MODERN TENDENCIES

The Caste Council is an institution of the past. Even where it survives it has little executive power. The decline of the caste council commenced with the increased growth of a centralised administrative system in India by the British. The establishment of courts of law at various levels tended to cripple the time-honoured caste councils.

Some individual instances have been recorded of British officers in Madras setting aside the authority of caste councils beginning from the early years of the 19th century. In Coimbatore a Major Macleod superseded hereditary headmen and ordered that cases of caste offences should be heard by a tāhsildār, assisted by an assembly of the most respectable men of the castes concerned. The tāhsildār, after consulting the assembly regarding the customs of the castes concerned, passed the sentence. Any one who refused to submit to the decision of the tāhsildār and the assembly was immediately banished from the district.

Another officer in Coimbatore, finding that the headman of a certain caste exercised his authority unjustly similarly ordered all caste questions to be settled in the public court by a tāhsildār with the advice of a caste council to the satisfaction of all concerned.<sup>59</sup>

Besides the growing authority of the British government, there appeared other forces which tended to disintegrate the caste influences. From the beginning of the present century nationalism appeared as a force in politics. Though

it did not influence the common man in the early stages the ideal of nationalism influencing the leaders of the country operated as a force weakening the hold of the caste system. Several leaders in Tamil Nādu and outside emphasised the influence of caste in operating against nationalism.

In particular this feeling influenced the educated youths even of the higher castes. Moreover, caste was attacked by the advanced people as an obstacle to liberty and pursuit of happiness.

Meanwhile, certain movements which appeared in South India aimed at attacking the position of superiority enjoyed by the brāhmaṇs over the centuries. The Liṅgāyats as a powerful group working against the Brāhmaṇs became influential in Bombay and Karnataka. In Madras during the first quarter of the present century there appeared the Justice Party which aimed at crushing the monopoly enjoyed by the Brāhmaṇs in Government service and in the field of education. ‘Equal opportunities for all and injustice to none’ were the watchwords of the Justice party. Whether the ideal was fulfilled in every case is doubtful. But it tended to awaken the feelings of the non-Brāhmaṇ castes in the cities and towns.

Later in the century there appeared an extreme movement against Brāhmaṇ supremacy and domination of certain castes in the name of religion. This was known as the Self Respect Movement. It demanded the abandonment of caste bigotry and intellectual arrogance. In fact it was the forerunner of the revolutionary ‘Drāvida Kazlagam’ organized by its leader, E. V. Ramaswami Naicker. The ramparts of the age-old caste system were assailed not only by the above-mentioned movements but also by certain other forces which affected the everyday life of the people.

The increase of railways and buses inevitably brought people closer and tended to break down the caste exclusiveness and angularities of the orthodox people. Industrial progress and the growth of factories were potent forces in towns operating against caste segregation and exclusiveness.

The spread of education not only brought pupils of different castes together but promoted among the products of higher education the irrationality of caste arrogance. This, supported by the stress laid by national leaders, had an effect. But the results of these should by no means be exaggerated. India, including Tamil Nādu, is pre-eminently rural and old customs die hard in the proverbially conservative villages. To the ordinary Hindu the village is his world. In particular the influence of the womenfolk in the villages should not be underrated. It has been rightly said that the grandmother, whose influence is especially great, stands for the maintenance of orthodox tradition and age-old ceremonies. Referring to her power and conservatism, Lord Curzon is said to have made the shrewd remark that what India needs is a new grandmother. Things are now changing; particularly the change is conspicuous in towns and cities.

Among forces working towards caste integration mention must be made of the attempts at social climbing adopted by several castes. Some castes and sub-castes abandoned their old traditional customs and adopted those of the higher castes. For instance, widow remarriages and child marriages were given up by people of certain castes who had adopted them for ages.

Certain irrational restrictions and disabilities which had been imposed on the lower castes provoked the wrath of

not only their own people but of some advanced sections among the higher castes as well. For instance, regarding the construction of houses with upper storeys there were restrictions. Members of many lower castes were forbidden to cover the upper part of their body except the waist.<sup>60</sup> In the case of women also, until 1865, they were obliged by law to go with the upper part of their bodies quite bare, if they belonged to the Ilavan, Paraiya or other castes.<sup>61</sup>

Protest against caste arrogance and monopoly gathered momentum. The agitation was no doubt slow but it began in the latter part of the 19th century and became increasingly popular.

The employment of priests for household sacrifices witnessed a change from the old practices. Certain non-brahmin communities began to employ non-brāhmaṇ priests in connection with household ceremonies. What is more significant is that in respect of certain temples where Brāhmaṇs alone were priests for a long time, decrees were obtained from High Courts that the monopoly need not be continued. These had a profound psychological effect. In many temples of Tamil Nādu, too, Brāhmaṇs were dislodged from the priesthood. Very recently in Tamil Nādu it was decreed by the Government that non-brāhmaṇs can also be priests. Those who have enjoyed the hereditary right of priesthood for ages protested, but the Tamil Nādu Government has in 1974 appealed to the Union Government to grant them freedom in the matter.

Meanwhile, from about the middle of the last century certain pieces of legislation have been enacted by the Central Government which have tended to break certain unwholesome customs based on caste traditions. The most important of

there was the *Caste Disabilities Removal Act of 1850* which dealt a decisive blow at the integrity of caste. The Act provides that a person does not forfeit his ordinary rights of property by loss of caste or change of religion. Though simple in nature, the Act has had vital implications.

Following this came the law regarding inter-caste marriage. In respect of this the decisions given by the Courts have varied. In some cases it was held that marriages between persons belonging to different divisions of the Brāhmins or the Śūdras were invalid unless specially sanctioned by custom; but recent decisions decree otherwise. In a Madras case, when a Hindu married a Christian woman turned into a Hindu, the marriage was accepted as one between members of different divisions of the Śūdra class and therefore valid. Integrity of caste was thus recognized as valid.

But much more had to be done before the legal position regarding intermarriage was improved. Social reformers were not satisfied with the existing state of affairs, and legislators tried to introduce bills legalizing intercaste marriages. The *Special Marriage Act of 1972* made intercaste marriages valid, provided the parties registered the contract of marriage, declaring *inter alia* that they did not belong to any religion. The clause requiring the renunciation of caste and religion for the purpose of intermarriage was naturally considered a hardship. Consequently there was continued agitation. It was only in the Reformed Legislature that Sir Hari Sing Gour succeeded in getting his *Special Marriage Amendment Act of 1923* passed. By this, it was not obligatory for persons marrying under the provisions of this Act to make the declaration prescribed in the Act of 1872. But still there were some drawbacks. Adoption by the married couple under this provision was not recognised. Moreover, those who were

married under this provision would cease to be members of the joint family to which they previously belonged. By and large marriage within the caste continues. The sanction of age-long custom is the difficult barrier against intermarriage. Educated social reformers must advocate the effective adoption of intercaste marriage.

There is no denying the fact that several changes have occurred in modern times to weaken the rigours of caste on Hindu society. The establishment of a centralised government, the influence of Western education, industrialisation and urbanisation, travel and mobility, the crusade against caste by enlightened social workers like Rāja Rām Mōhan Rōy and Mahātma Gāndhi, the influences of Ārya Samāj and other reform movements, the result of the activities and teachings of Christian missionaries and above all, the Government's earnest efforts to abolish untouchability and elevate the depressed classes have all cumulatively tended to weaken the rigours of the orthodox caste system.

But we are yet far far away from the stage when caste has lost its influence. There is a marked difference between what is seen at the outer surface and what is operative deeper in society. The caste feeling of animosity and rivalry is still in force though it is very subdued and covered by an air of cordiality and brotherhood.

The vitality of caste is very much in evidence at each decennial census. At that time the castes put up all claim to greatness and glorious traditions. Hundreds of petitions and memorials are received by the Government demanding that the different castes shall be recorded under new-fangled honorific names or shall be recognized as Brāhmins, Kshatriyas and Vaiśyas or shall be given a rank in an imaginary warrant of precedence.

It is mysterious that Mahātma Gāndhi who fought tooth and nail against untouchability was instant upon the continuance of Varnāshram Dharma. True, he quoted chapter and verse in support of his view, but to the present day youth it is inexplicable and irrational.

What is happening in Independent India may appear justifiable in one sense, but in actuality it works havoc by encouraging the perpetuation of caste denomination. The provisions of constitutional safeguards to the backward sections of the population, especially the Scheduled castes and tribes, have given a new lease of life to caste. It is significant that this contrasts with the aim of bringing about a casteless society which most political parties including the Congress, profess to be the avowed ideal.

Provision of educational concessions and scholarships and special considerations in the matter of recruitment to Government service are good in themselves and are in the nature of providing historic justice. But do not those things contribute to the perpetuation, if not strengthening of caste differences? Those who aim at the ushering in of a casteless society must weigh the pros and cons of the present policy and adopt a statesmanlike pattern.

Most abominable is the provision of new colonies and house-sites for Harijans or for separate classes of people. It need hardly be mentioned that it is a short-sighted, though popular policy.

One important feature in the aspiration of caste-ridden people deserves to be noticed. Although the lower castes struggle to ascend the social ladder, they are individually insistent that those below them should not rise higher. There is often a lamentable measure of hypocrisy in caste matters even among the educated people. Many condemn caste only in public.

## SECTION VII.

### THE DEPRESSED CLASSES.

The most abominable feature of the Indian caste system is the position accorded to the low castes. They have been described by various names such as Untouchables, Unapproachables, Depressed Classes, Ādi Drāvidas, Pañchamas, Scheduled Castes and so on. Harijan is the glorified term coined by Gāndhiji in 1933 for describing the total body of Depressed Classes. The term 'Scheduled Castes' is the expression standardised in the 'Constitution of the Republic of India', though this name was first coined by the Simon Commission.

People of the ancient tribes living generally in the outskirts of the plains, more often in hills and wooded regions, were described as the Scheduled Tribes. The Scheduled Tribes were occupying in some respects a better position than the Scheduled Castes: they were not subjected to the evils of untouchability and unseeability to the extent that the Scheduled Castes were subjected. One reason for this circumstance was that they lived outside the villages and towns which were regions of caste-culture. No doubt the Scheduled Tribes also were subjected to economic and sex exploitation; but on the whole their position was not so despicable as that of the Scheduled Castes.

In respect of population, according to the Census of 1961, the percentage of the Scheduled Castes in Tamil Nādu was 18.7 in relation to the total population of the State. A concentration of Scheduled Castes is found in the Districts of South Arcot, Tanjavur, North Arcot and Chingleput, forming 46% of the total Scheduled Caste population in the State.

The Scheduled Tribes are largely concentrated in the Nilgiris District where according to the Census of 1961, 3.16% of the population belongs to the Scheduled Tribes. Besides the Kota, the other Scheduled Tribes inhabiting the district of the Nilgiris include the Tōḍa, the Kurumba, the Paṇiya, the Iruḷa, the Kāṭṭu Naicka and the Sholega. Of these the Kōṭa, the Tōḍa and the Kurumba, who claim to be the autochthons of the regions where they live, are the only tribes found exclusively in the Nilgiris District. Besides these, in the Nilgiri District there live the Badaga who constitute the largest single community. Outside the Nilgiris, the Scheduled Tribes are found in the Salem, North Arcot and Coimbatore Districts of Tamil Nādu.

According to the 1971 Census the total population in Tamil Nādu is 412 lakhs of whom 73.13 lakhs belong to the Scheduled Castes and 3.30 lakhs to the Scheduled Tribes. A large number of farm labourers in the Tanjavur District belongs to the Scheduled Castes.

*II. Origin:* It is difficult to determine when untouchability made its appearance for the first time. There is no evidence that it existed in the pre-Vēdic age. In fact, in the Varṇa scheme of social order in the Vēdas, mention is made only of the four castes and the Untouchables do not find a place in them. There are no references in Vēdic literature to groups such as the Āyōgava, Chāndālā, Nishada and Paukasa who were outside the four castes and were held in contempt. It is not known when these denominations emerged. Probably in the age subsequent to the Brāhmaṇās, these distinctions appeared. The Pañcaviñca Brāhmaṇa does not show any indication that untouchability had arisen by the time when it was composed; if it were so, the washing of the feet of the Brāhmins could

not have been a duty of the Śūdra. The origin of untouchability has not been studied systematically. Writers like Muir, Hopkins and Fick have not investigated the question.

It is probable that the origin of the position of depressed classes is partly racial, partly religious and partly a matter of custom which emerged in the post-Brāhmaṇa period. A suggestion has been made that the origin of untouchability may be traced to the practice of pollution of women.<sup>62</sup> Pollution would appear to have been observed first in connection with menstruation. Death was another factor which prompted the observance of pollution. These were strange and unaccountable occurrences, and perhaps out of fear or out of the inexplicable nature of the phenomena, pollution was observed. When menstruation occurred, the primitive people, out of fright, might have put her away in a secluded part of the house.

It has been pointed out by G. K. Pillai that the name, given in Malayalam to menses is significant, for it is 'purattumāral' or shifting her to a place outside (the house) or it is 'Tīṇḍāri' meaning unapproachability. But Malayalam as an independent language had its origin only about the 9th century A.D., though 'Tīṇḍāri', the Tamil word, might have connoted the same idea from an early date. The word 'pula' from which pollution or its Latin root 'Pollus' may have been derived, denotes in Tamil and Malayalam, a kind of social ostracism during the period of impurity after the death of a relative. It is not unlikely that the term 'Pulayan', referring to a person of a particular low caste in Tamil and Malayalam, is derived from 'Pula'.

As mentioned earlier, it is probable that the idea of untouchability commenced from the time when notions of ceremonial purity gradually began to appear in the age

subsequent to that of the *Brāhmaṇas* and the epoch of the later *Vedas*. The *Pashcharimśa Brāhmaṇa* states that a person about to perform a sacrifice should not address a Śūdra. It adds further that a Śūdra should not be allowed to be present in the hall where a sacrifice was being offered and that the milk to be used for a fire oblation should not have been milked by a Śūdra. Thus it appears that the idea of impurity of the Śūdra appeared in the period of the *Brāhmaṇas* and the conception of untouchability must have appeared some time after the age of the *Brāhmaṇas*.

In the *Taittariya Brāhmaṇa*, prohibitions are laid down to be observed for a whole year prior to the performance of sacrifices. This shows that ideas of ceremonial purity began to appear in the *Taittariya Brāhmaṇa*. For the sacrifice milk was not to be brought by the Śūdra. It is notable that food after sacrifice was not to be offered to a *Chandāla*.

The question arises as to who are the Untouchables, or in other words, what are the characteristics which mark them out from the rest of the Hindus. The tests of the Depressed Classes or ‘*Avarṇas*’ ‘Untouchables’ or ‘External Castes’, or later called Harijans, are the following:—

- (1) Whether the caste can be served by clean Brāhmīns or not.
- (2) Whether it can be served by barbers, water carriers, tailors and such others who serve the caste Hindus.
- (3) Whether the caste pollutes a high-caste Hindu by contact or by proximity.
- (4) Whether a caste Hindu can take water from that caste.
- (5) Whether debarred from public conveniences such as roads, ferries, wells or schools.

- (6) Whether debarred from the use of Hindu temples.
- (7) Whether an educated man of the caste will be treated as an equal by the educated caste Hindu.
- (8) Whether the caste is merely depressed on account of its own ignorance, illiteracy or poverty, and but for that, would be subject to no social disability.
- (9) Whether it is depressed only on account of the occupation followed.

But several of these tests involve unknown or indeterminable factors, as for example, who is a clean Brāhmin ?, what constitutes pollution and so on.

The Dharmasāstras declare the Chāndālas to be the progeny of unions between a Brāhmin female and a Śūdra male. The age of the Dharmasāstras is difficult to be determined. But from the available evidence it may be held that the 6th and 5th centuries B.C. formed the period of the Dharmasāstras. Thus ideas about the Chāndāla and ceremonial purity might have appeared before 500 B.C.

References to pratilōma castes appear in the *Arthaśāstra* as well as in Patanjali's *Mahābhāshya* of about 150 B.C. Manu develops the idea of the degradation of the Chāndālas. He states that the Chāndālas were to reside only outside the villages and were subject to various inhibitions. They were not allowed to use gold or silver ornaments nor wear cotton, much less silk clothing. The use of skin or corpses alone was permitted for them. The duty assigned to the Chāndālas was to serve as hangmen and as undertakers for unclaimed corpses.

By the 2nd century B.C. it appears that the classes of people called the Chāndālas, Svapachas and Mṛitāpaś

who were all of mixed caste and thus below the rank a of Śūdras had slowly deteriorated in their social position between the time of Pāṇini (6th century B.C.) and that of Manu (c. 4th century A.D.). In the South the Paraiyan carried on scavenging, while leather working had become the traditional occupation of Mādiga and the Chakkiliyan in the south by the early centuries of the Christian era.

Dr. Ambedkar held that the practice of untouchability began in the Gupta period, around the 6th century A.D. The basis on which he formulates this conclusion is not clear. In fact, it would seem that the demon of untouchability began to appear earlier, surely sometime earlier than 4th century A.D. In Tamil Nādu, untouchability or the degradation of the lowest castes must have appeared in the Saṅgam age itself i.e. before the 3rd century A.D. There are pieces of evidence savouring of the practice of untouchability in the Puranānūru<sup>63</sup> and other early works of Tamil literature. The lowest class was known as Kadaiṣiyar, particularly referring to women of the last category.

However, there is no doubt that untouchability was the logical end of casteism. Subjective prejudices deepened the illwill towards the lower castes and that is the reason why the Śūdra castes excelled the Brāhmins and others in observing caste apartheid towards the untouchables.

In Tamil Nādu, the demon of untouchability became increasingly dominant in the Pallava, Chōla and later periods. There was an ever-growing adoption of untouchability and unapproachability all through the succeeding epochs, right down to the present time. In fact, the disabilities which were imposed on the depressed classes and on the untouchables assumed abominable forms with the lapse of time. For centuries Hindus have been taught that the lowest among them have been born to serve their betters and that,

to aspire to the rightful privileges of another caste is to sin against the basic tenet of their religion.

As a consequence, various kinds of disabilities and harassments were imposed on the lower sections of the community. The disabilities varied to some extent from region to region and from sub-caste to sub-caste among the lower groups. Apart from the social tradition, the economic position of the lower classes contributed to their misery and suffering at the hands of the higher classes. Most rural untouchables were landless. This was the prime factor in perpetuating the miserable plight of the untouchables.

In many villages the untouchables were for ages forbidden from using public roads at the same time as caste Hindus. Certain invidious distinctions appeared, as for instance, the prevention of certain classes of barbers from cropping the hair or shaving the faces of untouchables. Washermen, too, did not ordinarily serve the Harijans.

The Scheduled Castes whose numerical strength is equal to that of the Muslims were until recently the most persecuted people in India. The villages where the low classes lived in large numbers witnessed the most barbarous condition. Even when the depressed classes were admitted to schools, they were not allowed to sit on the same benches. As recently as 18—11—1972 there appeared a report in the Madras Mail that Harijans could not take water from common wells. This was a serious grievance.

The Harijans were subjected to humiliation and not infrequently to the barbarous violence at the hands of the higher sections. Reports were received from places in North India of villagers sacrificing a Harijan child to appease an

angry God of a Harijan being thrown into a well or burnt alive, of Harijan women being raped by gangs and of their houses being destroyed.

It is too well known that they were denied entry into temples and all sacred places. Perhaps that was the reason why the lower classes resorted to the worship at the shrines of Mādan and Isakki which were located in the outskirts of the village.

V. B. Kulkarni, writing in the Indian Express of August 22, 1973, stated that 'not a day passes without reports about the persecution of Harijans including physical assaults, murder, looting and burning of their property.'

Among other disabilities suffered by the lower classes was the restriction on the covering of the bosom with clothing. Presumably the genesis of this barbarous prohibition was to make it easy for recognition and avoidance of the lower castes by the high caste people. There were, as mentioned earlier, restrictions on the use of ornaments. Gold could be used only by the higher castes, while silver was allowed for some of the lower castes. The bulk of the depressed classes and Hill people had to be content with brass ornaments and beads.

For the use of certain lamps, particular kinds of music, conveyances etc. special permission had to be obtained, which was very often refused for the lowest classes.

The people of the higher castes were not affording scope for the education of the depressed classes. As Rowe, in his book, 'Every day life in India' writes: 'The very essence of caste lies in the degradation of others.' This was seen in restricting the scope of education to the lower classes.

The above-mentioned writer states further in his book: ‘So fiercely are the higher castes opposed not only to associating with low-caste pupils, but to their being educated at all, that it is with the greatest difficulty we can obtain sites for Christian schools in the villages, if the high caste people can throw their impediments in our way.’<sup>64</sup>

It is notable that so late as 1930 the ‘disabilities of the depressed classes were enforced and enlarged in Tamil Nādu. In December 1930 the Kallar in Ramanathapuram propounded eight prohibitions, the disregard of which led to the violence by the Kallar who furiously set fire to the huts and destroyed the properties of the depressed classes (Ādi-Drāvidas) for disregarding the prohibitions. These eight prohibitions were:

- (1) that the Ādi-Drāvidas shall not wear any ornament of gold or silver.
- (2) that the males should not be allowed to wear their clothes below their knees or above the hips.
- (3) males not to wear coats, shirts or banians.
- (4) nor were they to have their hair cropped.
- (5) Only earthenware vessels were to be used.
- (6) Women were not to cover the upper portion of their bodies with jackets and upper cloth.
- (7) Nor were they allowed to use flowers or saffron paste.
- (8) The people, obviously the males, were not to use umbrellas or sandals.

In 1931, the Kallar, not satisfied with the above eight restrictions, drew up a list of eleven prohibitions. These

included that the *Ādi-Drāviḍas* (1) should not read or get educated (2) should be asked to tend the cattle of the *Mirāsdārs* or landowners and plough their land and (3) must work as coolies only and not to own lands.

It is commonly thought that the Brāhmaṇins are responsible for the abuses of the caste system. But it is not so. True, they laid the foundation of the caste complex and paved the way for casteism. But in later times the caste Hindu non-Brāhmaṇins were the people who extended them to the extreme limit. For example, several subdivisions among Mudaliārs like Arcot, Tonḍaimaṇdala, Tuļuva, and Ponnēri appeared. There are numerous categories of Pillais.

Several public hotels refused admission for the Depressed classes. A Resolution of the Anti-Untouchability Conference of 1919 in Madras regretted to note that in Restaurants, Coffee Hotels, Hair-Dressing Saloons, water-pandals etc., notices are hung prominently excluding the ‘Untouchables’.

It is notable that one class of people was not to be seen by the caste Hindus. These were the washermen of the untouchables of Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari Districts. The practice was in vogue till at least 1931. These prohibited washermen were called ‘Poṇḍa Vaṇṇār’.

One class of untouchables adopted the repugnant practice of carrying nightsoil on the head. In Karnataka in 1973, under the pressure from the Minister, B. Basavalingappa, an acknowledged Harijan leader, the Karnataka Government ordered the revolutionary but humane step of abolishing the system of carrying nightsoil on their heads by the Harijans. It is significant to note that as a result of this bold action and as a consequence of his atheistic preachings, Basavalingappa

was compelled to resign from the Cabinet. It must be recalled that Gāndhiji was against this inhuman degradation of Harijans carrying nightsoil on their heads.

Unapproachability was common in Kerala and it had its influence in parts of Tamilnādu as well. Till the beginning of the present century these were rampant. Sir Herbert Risley quotes the Cochin Census Report: "A Nair can pollute a man of a higher caste, only by touching him, while people of the Kammāla group including masons, blacksmiths, carpenters and workers in leather pollute at a distance of 24 feet, and toddy drawers (*Ilavan* or *Tiyan*) at a distance of 36 feet; for Pulayas and Pariah who eat beef, the range of pollution is stated to be not less than 64 feet."<sup>65</sup>

Rivers in his book 'Social Organization' mentions that in Malabar 'a Nāyar may not approach within six paces of a Nambūdiri Brahmin, a man of the Barber caste not within twelve paces, a carpenter or goldsmith not within twenty-four. For a Tiyan, the limit was a distance of thirty-six and for a Pulayan, ninety-six paces'.<sup>66</sup>

If a Pulayan touched a Brāhmaṇin, the latter must make expiation by immediately bathing and reading some sacred books and changing his Brāhmaṇical thread. Others like the Nāyars should bathe and should particularly cleanse the places of the body touched by untouchables and Europeans with cowdung water. Things should be placed down at a distance and not actually given to the high caste men. True, these conditions are adopted in Kerala; but they had their influence more or less in the neighbouring Tamil Nādu. Particularly in respect of Nāñchināḍ, which was for a long time under the rule of the Travancore kings, but which is now in Tamil Nādu, the inhibitions associated with caste were more or less similar to those in Kerala.

Each caste was familiar with the prescribed distances within which they may approach or be approached by every other caste in the whole scale. Each caste had its own distinctive style of dress and ornaments, forbidden by law and custom to others.

The low caste people were not permitted to enter any public market. Hence they experienced great disadvantage in selling any little produce they happened to possess. Nor could they enter a shop.

Moreover, the Courts of Justice and Government Offices were mostly near temples. So persons of the low caste could not have access to them; they had to wait in the sun and rain for a number of days before the official came out and enquired.

The low caste people were not permitted to build their houses near the road side. Their dwellings were miserable huts made of sticks, with walls of mud or instead of walls, curtains made of coconut leaves and thatched with grass or coconut leaves far outside the main temples.

Little wonder that Dr. Ambedkar, the famous Harijan leader, was stung to the quick and deplored the social inequality that has prevailed for ages. While presenting the draft of the Constitution to the Constituent Assembly, he rightly observed: 'On January 26, 1950, we have equality in politics and inequality in social and economic life. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has so laboriously built up.'

Untouchability is the logical end of caste apartheid. Ambedkar's exposition of the origin, nature and effects of

untouchability constitutes a classic on the subject. He has pointed out how the Avāṇas were kept out of the Varna system and were forbidden from acquiring education and knowledge. He admits that the untouchables continued beef-eating which the upper castes had given up long ago. In fact, beef-eating decided their permanent degradation. Dr. Ambedkar's conversion of numerous untouchables to Buddhism did not have the desired effect because the old age-long habits continued, and the caste distinctions were not erased. The caste Hindus regarded the untouchable as a degraded person whether he was a Hindu or Buddhist. Further, the newly converted Buddhists were deprived of the specialised privileges which the untouchable Hindu enjoyed, after their conversion to Buddhism.

The pitiable position of the untouchables was first stressed by the Missionaries, who, no doubt, took advantage of the position to convert many of the depressed classes to Christianity. The missionaries opened schools in several places, particularly in southern Tamil Nādu. The London Mission Society started many schools in Madurai, Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari Districts and incidentally converted many people.

From the latter part of the 19th century, the Madras Government also paid some attention to the amelioration of the condition of the depressed classes. Between 1921 and 1931 this work of amelioration improved considerably. The Madras Government appointed a Commissioner of Labour entrusted with the task of encouraging the education of the depressed classes and looking after their economic interest.

Several private societies were also at work as, for example, the Depressed Classes Union, the Poor School

Society, and the Social Service League. Meanwhile, some political leaders organized the Self Respect Movement and the Depressed Classes Conference. They were responsible for an awakening in the minds of the non-brāhmin people and the depressed classes in particular. The leaders of these parties insisted on the admission of the socially backward pupils in Government and Grant-in aid schools, on opening special schools for the untouchable castes and also on the provision of scholarships and special facilities for the training of depressed class teachers.

On the economic side, the Government of Madras took steps towards the provision of house-sites for the relief of congestion and for purposes of freeing the depressed classes from oppression by their landlords, the organization and running of co-operative societies, the provision of drinking water by constructing new wells and repairing the old ones provisions of burial grounds and sanitary requirements of the depressed classes, the assignment of land for cultivation on payment of market value in easy instalments. As a result of these measures some progress was made. Some schools were constructed ; the number of pupils increased and several new co-operative societies were opened. But still much leeway had to be made. For example, in 1931, there were still six Districts in the Madras State untouched by the activities of the Commissioner of Labour.

Meanwhile, thanks to the efforts and propaganda of the social reformers some effort was undertaken by the State in improving the status of some of the backward classes. In 1859 a Proclamation was issued that there was no objection to Shāñār women either putting on a jacket or to Shāñār women of all creeds dressing in coarse cloth and tying themselves round with it, as the women of the

fishermen class do, or to their covering their bosoms in any manner whatever, but not like women of high castes. The objection to untouchable men wearing coats lingered for a long time in backward areas in Southern India. There was even a time when one who ventured to wear a coat was to be beaten by men of higher castes.

The first quarter of the present century witnessed some advance in the improvement of the position of the depressed classes. In 1923 the Government issued a resolution that no grants would be paid to any aided educational institution which refused admission to the children of the Depressed Classes.

However, according to evidence given in Madras before the Lee Commission in 1924, untouchables in such places and before such judges were not permitted to enter the courts, even though they were parties to a case or witnesses, but had to stand far off and their examination was conducted by a go-between who would go out, question them and take their answers to the judge. This was more or less similar to the practice in Malabar for a long time.

In 1923 the Government issued a resolution that no grants would be paid to any aided educational institution which refused admission to the children to the Depressed Classes. But, even in 1923 in Madras, the Government had in its Statute Book a law empowering village magistrates to punish the offenders of the lower castes by imprisonment, though the Government had pledged itself in 1914 to discontinue this inhuman practice. In 1925 a Bill was introduced in the Madras Legislative Council containing a resolution throwing open all public roads, streets or pathways, giving access to any public office, well, tank or place

of public resort, to all classes of people including the Depressed. In the Reformed Constitution, the Depressed classes were given special representation in the local and legislative bodies by nomination.

A Committee appointed to consider the question of extending education in Saidapet, reported in 1931 that Hindus of higher grades used every refinement of social and economic boycott to compel untouchables to withdraw their children from the public schools even to the extent of combining to deny their families employment, food and shelter.

The Legislative Council in Madras passed in 1930-1 an Act affirming the right of all classes and communities to have access to and make use of all public places such as streets, markets and tanks maintained from municipal funds and rendering an obstruction to their use an offence punishable by fine.

But these moves were viewed with great disfavour by the orthodox classes. There were outbreaks of fierce fanaticism. As far back as 1858 there were riots in the region of the Kanyakumari District because Shanar women converts took to wearing clothes above the waist. In 1899 their claim to enter temples in Tirunelveli and the opposition offered by other castes produced violent riots in which thousands were engaged. No wonder that by the end of the 19th century, particularly in the year 1895, the Shanars of Tirunelveli were concerted *enmasse* to Christianity.

In the present century the Congress Government as well as later the D. M. K. (Dravidar Munnetra Kalagam) Government have done a great deal for the improvement of the condition of the Harijans. A large number of schools have been opened particularly in certain regions with a view to benefit the lower classes. A conspicuous preference has been given to the Harijans

in respect of scholarships and appointments in Government service. Housing for Harijans was a major project undertaken by the D.M.K. ministry. It is continued by the present Government.

On 11th December 1944, Dr. Karunanidhi declared open four Harijan colonies, which can be more appropriately called as ‘Harijan villages’ in Tanjavur District. This marks the completion of the first phase of the one lakh housing scheme undertaken by the Tamil Nādu Harijan Housing and Development Corporation to construct 10,000 houses at a cost of Rs. 3 crores, to be given free of cost to the society. These houses are to be built in 278 villages in 14 districts of the south. Even more conspicuous has been the effort of the A.D.M.K. Government.

But while these efforts are laudable in redeeming the down-trodden Harijans from their despicable existence, their segregation in separate groups, cut off from the rest of the community, is not desirable. The objective should be to absorb all Harijans in the Hindu society on terms of equality as quickly as possible. No sense of patronage on one side and inferiority complex on the other should be allowed to continue any longer in the wider interests of the nation as a whole. The basic remedy for achieving this objective is real education for all and the promotion of a sense of equality. As recent as 1978, the problem of the Harijans and backward classes and the reservations to be made for them in Government service has provoked heated controversies and fierce conflicts in parts of North India, particularly in Bihar. There a conflict has arisen among the affluent higher castes like the Rajputs, the Bhumihars, Brāhmins and Kāyasthas on the one hand and the Yādavās, the Kurmis and the Koeris of the backward castes on the other. It is not unlikely that similar struggles appear in other parts of India, including Tamil Nādu.

## SECTION VIII

### MERITS AND DRAWBACKS OF THE CASTE SYSTEM

The unique institution of caste has been in recent years subjected to a severe condemnation. While the caste has its defects, the services that it has rendered in the past cannot be ignored.

Caste was a part and parcel of and a natural adjunct to Hinduism. Indeed caste and religion are so intermingled that people often take caste for religion. Caste has tended to foster Hindu religion for whatever it is worth, while the Hindu religion too has patronised it and fostered it through the ages.

In the mundane affairs of the world, caste has contributed to economic progress more often than not. It provided for a division of labour and a specialisation in the arts and crafts of the country. Choice of occupation was not always rigorously enforced; nevertheless, the time-honoured assignment of particular occupations to the various communities had its merits. A greater measure of progress was possible by certain classes of people pursuing the crafts hereditarily. Caste helped the development and transmission of skill, knowledge and behaviour. It has been even said that caste specialisation is that which had made India what it has been. Further, caste kept the Hindu traditions and culture intact for hundreds of years.

In particular the philosophical and intellectual progress attained by the Indians has been due to the specialisation of education by brāhmins. Though it meant a historic injustice to the others, from the standpoint of the progress of India, this monopoly of learning at the hands of Brāhmins contributed

to great intellectual and philosophical progress. Though it is too much to say, as has been done, that every Brāhmaṇ student became a walking encyclopaedia, concentration of learning and scholarship in one group facilitated the quicker and efficient development of thought and culture.

But at the same time, in respect of the manual arts and crafts, caste never stood in the way of individual advancement. The Sūdras were able to make progress all the time in the field of art, craft and science. They have been the producers, technicians, manufacturers and traders.

A spirit of corporateness was developed among the members of each caste. Not only did the caste councils exercise an effective control on the conduct and behaviour of the members of each caste, but they worked together in maintaining their status. By organisation and propaganda, a caste could change its name and in course of time get a new one accepted, and by altering its canons of behaviour in the matter of diet and marriage, can increase the estimation in which it was held. For example, it is interesting to observe that each census used to produce a decennial crop of 'Viśvakarma Brāhmins' (Pañchāla artisans). Several called themselves Kshatriyas. Thus in some cases the institution of caste served as a ladder for rising in the social scale. Naturally those who aspired a higher status tried to prove worthily of it and thus this tendency contributed to the moral elevation of the bulk of the people concerned.

In the religious sphere, the caste system operated in such a manner that the caste could change or modify its social and religious observance in accordance with changing ethical standards or the trend of public opinion. It influenced certain practices, for a great sentimental value was attached to social elevation by the adoption of changed usages. Thus, for

example, some castes desirous of rising in the estimation of the people, insisted on their members giving up the keeping and eating of pigs and chicken. Another of the early steps usually taken by a low caste wishing to rise in public esteem was the imposition of a ban on the remarriage of widows.

The caste system promotes cleanliness and order in a relative measure. The disapprobation of the elders in a caste served as a restraining force against unclean habits and even immoral conduct. It served also as a bond of union among all classes of the Hindu community. But this is almost a thing of the past. In comparison, the corporate spirit among people of other religions like Islam and Christianity, is weak among the Hindus. In the past, caste served as a potent factor in integrating Indian society and in welding into one community the various competing, if not incompatible groups composing it. Some of these groups have been occupational or religious. Others have been national, political and tribal societies, that must otherwise have either been absorbed and transformed or remained as unadjusted and possibly subversive elements. Their organization as members of castes paved the way for orderliness and unity. Generally speaking, conquered peoples and their conquerors blend into one society in which one or the other element may in the long run predominate. The caste system has effectively dealt with problems such as these which other societies have failed to solve. True, there are defects in the caste system which will be considered shortly.

The caste system has served as a political stabilizer, too. As Abbe Dubois states, the caste system is responsible for the preservation of India from complete barbarism and as the sure basis of orderly government, as a defence against despotism and a means for preserving the arts and as a sure means of preserving the Hindu pattern of culture under the regime of alien conquerors. Perfectly conscious of the drawbacks of the

caste system, he is also aware of its services in the past. He says 'I do not consider caste to be free from many great drawbacks, but I believe that the resulting advantages, in the case of a nation constituted like the Hindus, more than outweigh the resulting evils.'<sup>67</sup>

That the caste has served also as a social stabilizer is obvious. Indian society has survived a vast number of invasions, famines, revolutions and social upheavals of all kinds, and this is largely due to the caste system on which that society has constructed itself, a system which often survived even conversion to Islam or Christianity.

For achieving social justice it is an effective instrument. A caste union is a potent force in united action as in strikes of sweepers, scavengers and other workers. Caste plays an increasingly effective role in the elections to political bodies. While it has its merits, it operates against the real ideals of democracy. For regulating social functions caste has had a vital role to play. The caste system provides for the various functions necessary to social life, 'functions ranging from education to scavenging, from government to domestic service of the most menial kind'. In co-operative effort in social functions caste plays an important role. At the preparations of feasts as well as in connection with other items of the marriage ceremony it is the caste people who run to one's help. These and similar affairs of every day life require the co-operation of one's caste people. It has been rightly said that castes are small and complete social worlds in themselves, marked off definitely from one another, though subsisting within the larger society.

Finally, for the achievement of certain desirable social objectives, the caste can be employed as an useful instrument. For example, certain groups of Brâhmins of South India

decided to put an end to the practice of taking money for a bride, which custom was prevalent among them. In respect of dowry or the adoption of birth control, the leaders of caste can render effective service. The oilmongers of Kāñch, proposed to bind themselves by certain conditions about donations to temples and to observe them as 'jatidharma' i.e. duty owed to the caste by every member.<sup>68</sup> The feeling of caste-solidarity was and even today to some extent is so strong that it is truly described as caste-patriotism and properly guided, it can be turned to good account. Since caste encouraged group solidarity, caste has been defined by its admirers as 'ancient time-tested socialism maintaining the balance of power between the vocational classes'.

To conclude, the consideration of the merits of the caste system, the views of certain outstanding writers may be quoted.<sup>69</sup> Sri Monier Williams observed in his 'Brahmanism and Hinduism' that caste has been useful in promoting self-sacrifice, in securing subordination of the individual to an organized body, in restraining from vice and in preventing pauperism. Meredith Townsend wrote in 'Europe and Asia': "I firmly believe caste to be a marvellous discovery, a form of socialism which through ages has protected Hindu society from anarchy and from the worst evils of industrial and competitive life; it is an automatic poor-law to begin with and the strongest form known of trade unions".

But when all is said, this provides only one side of the picture. There are several defects and shortcomings in the caste system. Particularly foreigners have not always understood the inner weaknesses of the caste system.

#### *Drawbacks :*

As against the several advantages which have accrued from the caste system many defects have appeared. As years

passed on, it may be said that the disadvantages have become more and more serious.

Firstly the divisions increased; many new castes and sub-castes appeared, which led to acrimony and caste rivalry. Exclusiveness and bitterness followed. The first disintegrating element in caste was the 'dvija' baptism, which drew a line between the twice-born and those that were not twice born. This was followed through the centuries by the phenomenal growth of horizontal and vertical divisions of caste.

The correlation of caste to occupation had its advantages. But there were evil effects, too. Perhaps the most grievous consequence was the denial of education to the Śūdras. In the beginning, the Śūdra was debarred from learning the Vēda. Following this, in due course they were denied the benefit of education. It is an irrational and unfair discrimination which deprived the non-Brahmins and particularly the Śūdras of the opportunity of intellectual development to a great extent.

Less permanent in its effect was the continued economic backwardness of certain sections and of many individuals in the community. Since occupation was associated with caste, caste imposed a limit on the income of the members of the different castes and this had an inevitable influence on the peoples' economy.

In politics too, the caste distinctions and animosities led to frustration and failure to achieve the proper ideals of democracy. Caste exerts a great influence on electioneering and on legislative and executive responsibilities. It used to be a slogan that no votes of the Vanniyar caste were to be cast in favour of others. The influence of caste on village leadership

and factionalism is described in a number of field studies, reported in a book edited by Park and Tinker.

It is observed that in many constituencies the sub-caste groups are too small to form an effective majority, whereas the Varna groups of castes are large enough to do this. This might explain the apparent paradox that politics is weakening sub-caste, while it is strengthening caste (Varna group).

Psychologists have tried to study the nature of inter-caste prejudices and the influence of caste on the personality and outlook of its members. There is much bitterness and corroding currents of ill feeling between castes, particularly over the scramble for jobs. The favourable considerations accorded to particular castes in the matter of appointments and promotions foment the ill-feeling, and what is worse, they impair the efficiency of the service. Ghurye, a noted writer of Indian caste, states that during the last three or four decades there is a tendency for every caste to form an association of its members in order to procure scholarships and to further the special interests of that caste. Such organisations try to guard and enhance the social status in the hierarchy. Claims and counter-claims, bitterness and jealousy follow. There is a tendency for mutual acrimony to grow on what it feeds. However, the claim of the lower classes who had been denied education for ages, for preferential treatment is not irrational. How to effect a safe and sound reconciliation between the claims and their consequences deserve to be considered dispassionately.

The tyranny of the caste system in the past was even more abominable. The inhuman treatment meted out to the lower sections of the community was horrible. These have been considered earlier. Even when the economic position of certain classes improved, the deprivation of privileges continued. For

example, the Shāñārs of Southern India, in spite of the wealth they have acquired, were not given the right to build two-storeyed houses, to wear gold ornaments or use an umbrella.

‘The greatest hindrance to all social reforms is the caste.’ Any kind of deviation from the age-long tradition, however irrational it was, was viewed with disfavour and stoutly resisted. For example, if a respectable man of the untouchable class is invited to a house; the caste council would deliver its judgment against the householder and condemn him as unfit for intercourse. Again, the degradation in the position of women was sanctioned and continued by the caste system. In fact the higher the caste the lower was the freedom of women.

Social unity is sacrificed to sectional benefit. In the desire to help one’s caste fellows many forget the principle of social justice and are led to do consciously or otherwise injustice to the members of other castes. Very often, irrational practices appear. For instance, early this century the Brāhmins of Madras started a fund called “The Triplicane Fund”, shares in which could be held only by Brāhmins. Those responsible for starting it included gentlemen of ‘culture, education and learning’. Very narrow outlook indeed! Those who decry excesses of communalism should themselves first set the example of a healthy, wholesome, non-communal outlook in practical affairs of life.<sup>70</sup>

As against Brāhmins who were supposed to be the only successors of the Āryans there appeared the Justice Party and the Dravidian Federation and still later the Dravida Kalagam and Drāviḍa Munnērra Kalagam. They have often become bitter and vituperous opponents of the Brāhmins. General ideas of caste and racial hostility influenced by atheism on the one hand and semi-Marxist ideology of social equality on the other, combined to become formidable foes of the age-old beliefs and practices.

The caste system was once the soul as well as the boby of Hinduism. The iniequalities and iniquities of the caste system are justified by the Hindu belief in the transmigration of souls combined with the doctrine of Karma. When the caste system was initiated it possessed several merrits, but with the change of time and with the growth of vested interests, it lost almost all its strength. As has been stated earlier, caste in the beginning was flexible and mobile. This is evident from Manu's prescriptions of marriage which allow *anulōma* and prohibits *pratilōma*. But gradually it became rigid and stereotyped. As Malley puts it 'the caste system became a steel frame of the Hindu social structure'. As the divisions grew more and more rigid, the caste system lost many of its advantages. Sherrings, an authority on the subject of caste, characterises the social mechanism as "a monstrous engine of pride, dissension and shame", and has not one word to say with reference to it or in favour of its authors. the Brāhmīns.

An unfortunate circumstance is that the castes instead of becoming reduced in number have increased and are increasing. The new divisions which have emerged and are emerging are sub-castes, and not castes. The rise of new sub-castes is due to several factors : (1) Commonly the adoption of new occupations or new patterns of old occupations gives rise to sub-castes. Soon new theories of legends emerge claiming superiority over the others. (2) Often subcastes are formed by the adoption of new or reformed customs such as are followed by the higher castes ; for example, by forbidding the remarriage of widows or by adopting the practice of child marriage or by adopting vegetarianism. It must be remembered that those who have adopted the reformed practices look down upon their erstwhile castefellows with supreme contempt. (3) Sometimes a new sub-caste arises by the adoption of a religious cult or a religious practice ; as Sir Alfred Lyall puts it, 'sects always tend to

become sub-castes'. (4) Occasionally sub-castes arise as a consequence of migration of one caste to a different part of the country. (5) Finally, change in economic position leads to the formation of virtually a sub-caste. In recent times there is a tendency for certain sub-castes to merge with each other. Education and changes in economic position partly account for it. The non-availability of suitable matches in one's own sub-caste is a basic factor promoting this wholesome change.

It is well known that the caste system is especially rigid in South India, where it even affects the lay-out of villages. The houses of Brāhmaṇins are in one quarter, those of the Śūdra castes in another, and among the latter any caste that is sufficiently large in number will have a separate block. Just outside the village are the houses of the less respectable castes; and in the fields, still further removed from the village site, cluster the huts of degraded castes like the Paraiyar.

On the whole, in the present state of affairs the caste system is a very harmful institution. No wonder, caste is often described by European scholars as an iron chain which has fettered each class to the profession of their ancestors and has rendered any improvement on their own part impossible. This view may, to some extent, be regarded as correct so far as the lower classes are concerned. But with regard to the higher classes, caste is a golden chain which they have willingly placed around their necks and which had fixed them only to that which is noble and praiseworthy from their point of view.

Sir Henry Maine in his 'Ancient Law' described the caste system as 'the most disastrous and blighting of all human institutions.' Dr. Rabindranath Tagore described it as 'a gigantic system of cold-blooded repression; and held

that the regeneration of the Indian people solely depends upon its removal. Joseph Chailley wrote that 'caste bars out altruism, unity and patriotism', and that 'its rules render true social life and progress impossible.' Lack of flexibility was responsible for most of its faults. No wonder, Rev. Mateer cried out: "A most cruel and selfish thing is Hindu caste."

## SECTION IX

### THE FUTURE OF THE CASTE SYSTEM

Caste had its merits and defects. But in the present age of rationalism it is realised that the defects outweigh its merits. There is no doubt that caste and casteism have imposed disastrous consequences on Hindu society. Beginning from the time of Lord Buddha, several large-hearted leaders have condemned the caste system and have offered solutions to its destruction. Kabir, Rājarām Mōhan Rōy, Swami Rāmakrishṇa, Ambedkar and numerous other reformers have called for a revision of the caste. Many have felt the imperative need for changing the traditionally stratified society and achieve the goal of egalitarian social order. But few have effectively succeeded in providing a solution for the achievement of their object. The development of a casteless society must be the aim of every right-minded Indian. On the other hand, many have repeatedly urged that

"The caste system, the steel frame of Hinduism, is held to have been divinely ordained and is connected with the law of Karma, according to which a man's status in this life is determined by his actions in past lives".<sup>72</sup>

In one way caste was a *democratic* institution, as its laws and regulations were the expression of the common will, to which all had to yield obedience. On the other hand, the system was the *negation of democratic principles*, its own cardinal principle being a belief in the inherent and divinely ordained inequality of man.

Some of the orthodox sections are really against any change in the system; but they do not have the courage

or the facility to resist the upsurge against the caste. Even among others who profess to realise the need for a change, not many are sincere. Some rationalists among the higher sections and many of the lower classes are vaguely in favour of the abolition of the caste system, though all of them are not sure of the ways and means of achieving the goal.

In this connection the existence of a certain measure of hypocrisy common among certain classes of the Hindus should be reiterated. This is the jealousy of people about the castes immediately above them, and contempt towards those immediately below. Although the lower castes struggle to ascend the social order, they are individually insistent that those below them should not rise higher.

Each caste tries to prove that it is equal to a 'superior' caste and superior to its 'equals.' Ingenious arguments are advanced to prove the superiority. Even many of those who profess to decry casteism and think that caste is on its last legs are inwardly proud of their own superior position in the gradation of caste. This is true of even many Westernized members of the upper classes. These people may observe very few dietetic restrictions, marry outside caste, but none of these means always ensures that they have escaped entirely the bonds of caste. They show caste attitudes in surprising contexts. Narrow communalism is often rampant. In the first popular cabinet in Mysore headed by K. C. Reddy, not only were the ministers chosen on a caste basis, but each had a secretary from his own sub-sub-sub caste. In Tamil Nādu too, the Vellāla, Nādār, Vanniyar rivalries find their place.

In actuality the caste Hindus are opposed to Harijan uplift or even to elevate the classes immediately below

them. The amusing circumstance is that in the political and administrative sphere there is an acute struggle between castes to be classified as 'back-ward' in order to secure preferential treatment in the attempt to get employment, seats in educational institutions etc.

The difficulties in eradicating caste from our social organization are serious. In fact, as M. N. Srinivas says: 'Caste is an institution of prodigious strength and it will take a lot of beating before it will die. But a realization of this difficulty should not prevent us from taking all possible steps to prepare the ground for the disintegration and final collapse of the institution of caste.'

The basic solution is the adoption of intermarriage between castes, because the vital difference between caste and class is endogamy. But though several have advocated it, it has not received that wide popularity which would hasten the liquidation of caste. Bold and educated youngsters must come forward, and the Government can even encourage it by according a preferential treatment to such couples in the matter of employment. This would be much better than providing easy employment only on the basis of caste.

In the year 1964, in Mysore, twenty brave bachelor students vowed intermarriage and wanted to popularise it. By and large they proved successful. In Tamil Nadu, as in the rest of India, this laudable example must be followed. The scheme of intermarriages must be undertaken by young couples themselves. Those arranged by the elders are less likely to prove successful. In this connection it must be said that co-education deserves encouragement, though conservatives are against it.

Further, caste patriotism must be fought on all fronts. Caste must be ignored; Government should avoid indicating it in all public announcements, applications for appointments etc. Caste must be, if at all, purely an individual affair. But it is very doubtful whether in practice it can be achieved. Caste consciousness persists in a surreptitious manner. Secretly the caste and sub-caste to which persons belong are ascertained. Not infrequently those who profess to be nationalists are communalists to the core. This must be clearly exposed and condemned. Even others who foment communal rivalry must be considered enemies of society. Among certain aggressively backward castes, the declaration of one's caste is held to be a matter of importance. When the then Revenue Minister, Māṇikkavēlu Nāicker, announced in 1958 that he would no longer use 'Nāicker', as his surname of the caste to which he belonged, namely the Vanniyakula Kshatriyar, he was accused of showing disrespect to the entire community.

The tendency to glorify one's caste and to exalt its superiority must be viewed with great disfavour. It is a weakness with some to speak high of one's caste, sub-caste or family status though in a subtle manner. These must be considered really vulgar, not to be tolerated by a cultured society.

Nor should any one justify the continuance of the spirit, if not the form, of the caste system by covert appeals to unity and continuity. For instance, so recently as January 10, 1976, Sri R. Balasubramanya Iyer of Dindigul writes in the 'Hindu' that 'it must be the primary duty of every one to strive hard for the promotion of good-will, brotherliness, peace and unity. The path of practical wisdom lies in the achievement of unity in the midst of diversity, and that

will be real abolition of caste without its annihilation.' It is submitted that these empty words have come too late in the day.

In fact, as S. Obul Reddi, the Governor of Andhra Pradesh, had suggested, legislation must be introduced abolishing the entire fabric of caste system and announcement of one's own caste by any means must be made punishable, as has been done in the case of untouchability.

It is true that it may not be possible to eradicate overnight a system which has flourished for many centuries by a stroke of the legislative pen. Our customs, manners, ways of dressing, caste marks, surnames, the accent of the mother-tongue are all conditioned to a large extent by the all-pervasive caste system. But these too, must be gradually changed and made uniform. Urbanization has had a considerable effect in this direction. But it must be actually adopted as part of an organized plan by social reformers.

Unfortunately the policy of encouraging the progress of the backward and depressed classes by the Government has proceeded in some respects in an unwise direction, because caste segregation and nomenclature are strengthened and sought to be perpetuated. Even more dangerous is the practice of building houses and hostels for people of particular castes in certain localities. This has a very unwholesome effect. In fact, people of different castes must be compelled to live together in colonies and hostels and study together in schools and colleges. All devices for the shedding of separatism in all spheres must be adopted. Repeating again, in the matter of allotment of houses, too, preference may be given to those who have adopted intermarriages.

Moreover, the rigidity in the matter of choosing occupations must vanish. A far more important prescription is that the people of the lower castes who had been so far victims of unclean habits must be made to reform themselves. Leaders of the depressed classes must assume the role of genuine reformers of their community. In particular, vegetarianism must be adopted by people of all castes. It has to be emphasised that vegetarianism was and is believed to accord a position of superiority in the gradation of caste. Instead of compelling vegetarians to change their pattern of diet, it would be easier and better in the long run for non-vegetarians to adopt a vegetarian diet for achieving social equality. In fact a process of Brahmanization of all Hindus would be a noble ideal.

Often, stress is laid on people of all castes being permitted to serve as priests in temples. It is doubtful whether this reformation may serve to break down the feeling of superiority on the part of brāhmaṇas. Even so, the Government of Tamil Nādu has undertaken the step of addressing the Government of India to permit the legalisation of throwing open priesthood in temples to all qualified persons irrespective of caste. No one can deny the tremendous efforts made by the D. M. K. to break down the barriers of caste, though certain modifications of their policy would be desirable. It is expected that the still more advanced A. D. M. K. will introduce them.

An important step now undertaken, and necessary to be developed still further, is the need to provide educational facilities to the backward classes which had been denied education over the centuries. It is nothing but historic justice that those who had been denied over the ages the facilities to cultivate intelligence, memory and imagination should be provided with all the requirements for sound education.

That would tend to remove the sense of inferiority complex now common among the lower classes. It was said

that in Karnataka "the innate characteristic of the Harijan is his meekness and almost stoic acceptance of his lot as the lowest in the social hierarchy, with hardly any trace of militancy in contrast to the characteristics associated with other minorities like the Muslims and Christians." More or less the same is true of the Harijans in Tamil Nādu, too. The degradation which they had been suffering for ages has left its mark on their outlook. Though this attitude is now gradually disappearing, the Harijans were shy of mixing with others in restaurants and other eating houses. The change for the better which has appeared, must still further be encouraged.

As a social leader, Mr. Khairamody pointed out, the Harijans or neo-Buddhists are still not emerging from their seclusion. The result is that despite education, their 'in-living' does not broaden their out-look. This is in a large measure true of the Harijans in Tamil Nādu as well. Gradually a healthy change is appearing for good among the student community.

For raising their position, economic independence must be provided. The land ceiling law must be enforced to their advantage. Moreover, more and more of them should benefit by industrialization and urbanization.

Degrading occupations like scavenging and flaying of cattle must be taken away from the Harijans. In fact they should not be thrust upon people of certain castes only. Gandhiji was particularly insistent on that.

It need hardly be mentioned that in respect of temple entry and in the removal of untouchability as a whole, the lead given by Gandhiji is epoch-making. But this great champion of the Harijans would not disturb the age-long Varṇāshrama system. His explanation for this anomalous attitude is not convincing.

In fact the cornerstone of the caste system has been religion. The leaders of the Hindu religion sanctioned caste discrimination and untouchability. No wonder that the Buddha fought against caste and Brāhmanism. In spite of many others opposing them, these have survived with a marvellous resilience.

The conversion of Hindus to Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity or Islam has not succeeded in obliterating the distinctions of caste. An Indian Christian goes so far as to say that owing to caste influences the convert finds that the Xian community is not a homogeneous community but is divided into castes and parties, mutually exclusive, jealous and inimical.<sup>72</sup>

The depressed classes or untouchables have the least objection to renouncing Hinduism and embracing Xianity because by so doing they acquire a higher status. (O'Malley p 673). Naturally one solution suggested was the total abandonment of religion and faith in God. This atheism was promoted and developed by the Drāviḍa Kaṭagam. But though this is not the place to question the rationale behind atheism, there is objection to the abandonment of religion on moral grounds. Religion has been the sustainer and prop of morality. It is in that direction that religion has to be viewed by the rationalist. A negation of God would militate against the authority of an ethical code, because morality is closely allied to religion.

A religious belief which would stretch beyond the trammels of caste would be essential for the progress of humanity. G. K. Pillai states that a movement towards casteless gods is already visible in Malabar, where socialism is also rampant. With the gradual disappearance of caste as it is now there, a reaction in favour of Śāsta worship is well in evidence. In the worship of Śāsta, no caste restrictions are observed. Pilgrims to places like Sabari-Malai to worship Śāsta, observe

no caste; there the Brāhmaṇ, non-brāhmaṇ, untouchable, all on perfect equality, repair to the presence of the deity. It is interesting to note that Śāsta (the Dravidian deity) was till recently, without the sacred thread, though a few years ago, like other Hindu Gods, Śāsta too has become brāhmaṇised, but it has not introduced other caste distinctions.

My own conviction is that Theosophy may come to the aid of eradicating the evils of caste. It is said that Theosophy is against caste. But from the large number of high caste Hindus having become members of the Society in recent times, there is a suspicion that it is not truly catholic. This can be removed by Theosophy actively adopting a policy of converting many of the Hindus of lower castes. Theosophy stands for universal religion and it would be most appropriate if it receives within its fold by active propaganda people of all castes among Hindus in the first instance. G. S. Arundale's 'The Besant Spirit' really advocates the brotherhood of religion and it is applicable in the present context to India in particular. In fact, the aim of the Theosophic society is to promote universal brotherhood without distinction of any kind.

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## N O T E S

1. In the Rig Vēda, the word ‘Vārṇa’ is never applied to any one of the four groups. It is only the Ārya Vārṇa (or the Aryan people) that is contrasted with the (Dāsa Vārṇa). On the other hand, the Śatapata Brāhmaṇa describes the four groups as four Vārṇas. (Vedic Index II, p. 247). It must be noted that ‘Jāti’ and ‘Vārṇa’ are quite different in origin and in function. Vārṇa literally means colour, and it seems probable that the four Vārṇas arose from the class structure of the Vēdic Āryan tribesmen under the influence on the one hand of contact with the darker aborigines and on the other, of the rising pretensions of the priesthood, who constituted themselves as a separate class.
2. See G. S. Ghurye: Caste and Class in India (New Third Edition in India) pp. 46-7. But it must be noted that the nucleus of the four-fold division is found in the Rig Vēda itself which speaks of three classes of society, Brahma, Kshatra and Vis. It is only in the later Purushasūkta hymn that a reference occurs to the four orders of society.
3. Abbe Dubois: Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies (3rd edition) p. 31
4. Risley: People of India (1915), pp. 270 ff. Risley states that the conquering Āryans behaved towards the conquered Dravidians in the same way as some planters in America behaved towards the African slaves.
5. L.S.S.O' Malley: Indian Caste Customs (1932), pp. 13-14.
6. The Portuguese, the Dutch and the British have a kind of plural society in which different elements perform different functions. But they are not hereditary,
7. J. H. Hutton in his ‘Caste in India’ 2nd edn., 1951, has stated that by the middle of this century over 5000 books have

appeared on caste. These have been written not only by ethnologists, statisticians, economists, missionaries and historians but also by caste organizations.

8. G. K. Pillay: Origin and Development of Caste (Kitab Mahal, 1959), 106-8.
9. Ibid. pp. 142-44. The question of Mundas having been the ancestors of Brahmins of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa is seriously questioned by anthropologists and ethnologists. But it is undeniable that in some parts of the country like Tamil-Nādu large numbers of tribal peoples were absorbed into brāhmaical society.
10. Manu Smṛiti was first translated into English in 1794 by Sir William Jones, the father of modern Indology. That publication led to numberless studies on Hinduism, and particularly on the caste system.
11. A. L. Basham thinks that the Purushasukta hymn was perhaps composed about 900 B. C. See his "Some Aspects of Ancient Indian Culture" p. 6.
12. It must however be observed that Hutton's explanation of the complex institution by a single factor has its limitations.
13. Puṣanāñūru: 335: 7-8. This verse suggests that these four, viz. tuḍiyan, pāṇan, paṭaiyan and kaṭamban were the early inhabitants. Only the names might have appeared later.
14. Puṣam : 183.
15. It is important to remember that the lowest or fourth category was never called Sūdra except by the Brāhmins. The earliest reference in Tamil literature of 'Sūdra' is in the commentary to the Periyapurāṇam of Ārumuka Nāvalar; he speaks of the fourth class as 'Sat Sūdra'. The Sangam works like the Paripāṭal and Nānmaṇikkadigai state that the Vellālar were agriculturists and landowners but they do not describe them as Sūdras.

16. Tol. Marapiyal : 631. Some writers hold that these 'Sūdras' like several others are later interpolations. But this view is not proved.
17. Ibid. 636.
18. Ibid. 637. This can be compared with the fact that the Pallavas called themselves 'Brahma Kshatriyas' as may be seen from the Pallankōil inscription, the Kaśakuḍi Plates and other inscriptions. The Pullūr Plates trace the origin of the Pallavas to Drōṇa; and all the Pallavas though Brāhmaṇins by birth, were Kshatriyas by occupation. See the author's paper entitled 'Were the Pallavas Brāhmaṇins'? Annals of Oriental Research Silver Jubilee Volume.
19. As noticed earlier K. A. N. Sastry wrote in the *Hindu* of April 17, 1960: "We do not possess a single line of Tamil literature demonstrably ante-dating the contact between the pre-Aryan Tamil and Aryan Sanskrit cultures". What is the implication? The Śaṅgam works are all products of the fusion between the pre-Āryan and Sanskrit languages! Some of the early Śaṅgam works and their vocabulary must be looked into before such mistaken and preconceived ideas are paraded. Again, the same historian, misquoting Caldwell who wrote in 1856, holds that 'the pre-Āryan Tamils had a rather primitive and poorish culture'. See his 'The Culture and History of the Tamils' (1963) p. 7.
20. Kūram Plates: Line 17. S.I.I. Vol. I. p. 152.
21. There has been a doubt whether the Pallavas were Brāhmaṇins. But they described themselves as 'Brahmakshatriyas'. The probability is, as stated earlier, they were Brāhmaṇins who took to fighting and thus became Kshatriyas in fact.
22. See S.I.I., Vol. I, p. 35 ff.
23. S.I.I. Vol. II. p. 265,
24. S.I.I. Vol. II. Part III, p. 278.
25. 7 of 1898.
26. 84 of 1892.

27. S.I.I. Vol. I, p. 154.
28. 6 and 64 of 1898.
29. Tiruvalaṅgādu Plates, 1.456
30. A. R. E. 1921, II, 47.
31. 189 of 1925.
32. Dr. K. Minakshisundaram: Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures, 1974 January to June, pp 4-7; particularly the concluding para on p. 7.
33. "Brāhmaṇ and peasant in early South Indian history": Adyar Library Bulletin: 1967-68.
34. Contributions to Indian Sociology, New Series, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 135-6.
35. V.R.R. Dikshitar: War in Ancient India, pp. 183, 184.
36. Kalittogai: 4 : 3, 5 : 2. I think that the Kalittogai was one of the later works of the Etṭuttogai of the Śaṅgam age. Even so, it cannot be placed later than the 5th century A.D.
37. O'Malley: Indian Caste Customs (1932), p. 43 and J. H. Hutton: Caste in India, (1961), p. 11. Although the Kaṇṭjas, Maṭavas and Agambadiyas have several common characteristics, there are differences too. See S. Kadhirvel, himself a Maṭava, writing about this in 1977 in his 'A History of the Maṭavas' pp 14-15.
38. S.I.I. Vol. I, 86.7; Vol. III 121, 123.
39. A. R. E. 1933-4.
40. As observed earlier, the Kammājas wore the holy thread. They claimed the right of performing their own marriages and religious ceremonies.
41. A. R. E. 1925: 397; 1925: 18; 1900: 80.
42. T. W. Ellis: Kuṭṭal, p. 44, quoted in the Madras Journal of Literature and Science, 1887—88.
43. Nelson, Madura Manual, Part II, Ch. I, p. 5.
44. Venkayya's Introduction to S.I.I. Vol. II. p. 9.

45. Vēlaikkār was a general name for troops, as is made clear by the Mahāvāṁśa. See K. A. N. Sastri: Cōlas (Second Edition), page. 315. See also M. Srinivasa Iyengar: Tamil Studies, p. 101. Vējaikkār served also as functionaries of temples and as soldiers at times.
46. It may be noted here that the Tiruvāliśvaram inscription (120 of 1905) speaks of 'Mūnrukai Mahāsenai'.
47. 189 of 1895. A theory has been advanced that originally the people of South India were followers of the matriarchal system. When the Āryans penetrated into Tamilaham, they introduced patriarchy. Those who adopted patriarchy belonged to the Right Hand while those who resisted it were of the Left Hand. This view is fantastic.
48. A. R. E. 1936—37.
49. A. R. E. 31 of 1936—37.
50. A. R. E. 1926 : 253 (p. 11).
51. Taylor: Catalogue Raissonance III, p. 305.
52. A. R. E. No. 92 of 1918
53. S.I.I. Vol. V. No. 554.
54. A. R. E. 476 of 1921.
55. S.I.I. Vol., No. 238.
56. Abbe Dubois: 'Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies', ed. by Beauchamp, P. 27. f.n.I. In Pōndichēry and Karaikkāl the distinction between the Right and Left Hand castes ceased to exist only by the 1860's.
57. Madras Census Report of 1911, p. 138.
58. Bombay Census Report of 1911. Part I, p. 201.
59. F. Buchanan: A Journey from Madras through the countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar.
60. Wilson: Indian Caste; II, P. 79.
61. Madras Census, 1891, p. 224.

62. G. K. Pillai: Origin and development of Caste (1959). pp. 176-7. Though the theory advanced by this writer is feasible, it seems to have had only a local application. Dr. Ambedkar in his book '*Who were the Shudras?*' traces the origin of untouchability to the measures taken by the Hindus to keep the Buddhists away, who had refused to be converted to Hinduism. This too is not convincing.
63. Puram: 82 and 287.
64. Rowe: Every day Life in India: p. 80.
65. Risley, Sir Herbert: The People of India, p. 112.
66. Rivers: Social Organization, p. 153. Tiyan is the name used as an alternative for Iyava in certain places in Kerala.
67. Abbe Dubois: Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies: Third Edition, p. 28.
68. The Fifth Report from the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company, Vol. II, (ed. 1883), p. 575.
69. L. S. S. O'Malley: Indian Caste System: Preface. There have been some gross exaggerations. A Dutch Indologist, G. H. Mees in his work 'Dharma and Society' prescribes the ancient Indian caste system as a panacea for the social evils of the West. Among numerous Indian writers, Chakladār is prominent in glorifying the old caste system. See his "Social Life in Ancient India" pp. 203-4.
70. The Indian Social Reformer, Bombay, October 10, 1926.
71. L. S. S. O'Malley: Modern India and the West (1941), p. 354.
72. P. N. F. Young and A. Ferrers, "India in Conflict" (1920) p. 134.

## XVI. The Kollam Era

The genesis of the Kollam Era has been a subject of endless controversy. This paper seeks to examine the principal theories advanced so far, particularly in the light of a piece of indirect evidence now obtained.

Perhaps the oldest of the theories is that which associates the origin of the Kollam Era with the conversion of Chēramān Perumāl to Islam and his consequent pilgrimage to Mecca.<sup>1</sup> Exponents of this theory hold that the Era commenced from the day on which Chēramān Perumāl embarked from Kodungallūr Kollam to Mecca.

Though the tradition regarding Chēramān Perumāl's conversion to Islam has been persistent, the evidence in support of it is hardly convincing.<sup>2</sup> It is significant that no foreign visitor prior to the advent of the Portuguese adverts to this alleged conversion. None of the travellers, Sulaimān (A.D.850), Alberūini (A. D. 970-1039), Al Kazwīni (A. D. 1263-76) and Marco Polo (A. D. 1271-94), to mention but a few, refers to it.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the chronological disparity between the commencement of the Kollam Era and the alleged date of his pilgrimage to Mecca tends to discredit the authenticity of the conversion. The traditional account held that Chēramān Perumāl proceeded to Mecca in order to visit the Prophet!<sup>4</sup> Sheikh Zeinuddīn, the author of the *Tofutul-Mujahideen*, though disinclined to believe the tradition completely, hazards the view that the king must have left his native land 200 years after the flight of the Prophet from Mecca to Medīna,<sup>5</sup> which would have corresponded to A. D. 816.

Assuming, however, for the sake of argument, that Chēramān Perumāl's embrace of Islam is historical, it is inconceivable that such an unpopular act would have emboldened him to commemorate it by the institution of a new era. The Periyapurāṇam account of Chēramān Perumāl's pilgrimage to Chidambaram, his momentous interview with the saint Sundaramūrti Nāyanār and his ultimate disappearance, causing popular fervour, seem to stand on a more reliable footing. But that, too, does not provide a clue to the genesis of the new era. The words 'Kollam tōṇpi' (since Kollam arose) which constitute the epigraphic description of the origin of the era do not seem to fit in with any incident in the life of Chēramān Perumāl.<sup>6</sup>

Another theory regarding the origin of the Kollam era is that it was inaugurated by the Vēṇāḍ sovereign, Udaya Mārtāṇḍa Varṇma. Mr. Shangunny Menon states thus: "In the Kali year 3926 (A. D. 825) when king Udayamārtāṇḍavarṇma was residing in Kollam (Quilon) he convened a Council of all the learned men of Kerala with the object of introducing a new era, and after making some astronomical researches and calculating the solar movements throughout the 12 signs of the zodiac and counting astronomically the number of days occupied in this revolution in every month, it was resolved to adopt the new era from the 1st of Chīngam of that year (15th August A. D. 125) as Kollam year one and call it the solar year."<sup>7</sup> It is added that formerly the Paraśurāma cycle had been in vogue in Kerala beginning from 1176 B. C., and that with the third cycle, Udayamārtāṇḍavarṇma decided to institute the new era. But there is absolutely no reference to the Paraśurāma cycle in any of the known sources of information. Apparently this theory has had its origin in legendary lore. Mr. Shangunny Menon's account is stated to have been based on the Grandhavari, the records of the Śrī

**Padmanābhasvāmy Temple.** But the Grandhavari was compiled long after the Kollam Era was instituted. Accounts pertaining to the period anterior to it would have been based on tradition and legends.

A third view seeks to connect the rise of the Kollam era with the great Śaṅkarāchārya. The new era is believed to have been inaugurated in commemoration of Śaṅkarāchārya's promulgation of ordinances prohibiting the Namūdiris from following certain customs. Specific inhibitions of anāchāras or unholy customs are stated to have been laid down by Śaṅkarāchārya at Kurakkēṇi Kollam (Quilon) on the 1st of Chiṅgam and at Pantalāyini Kollam on the 1st of Kannि, since these two Kollams were the capitals respectively of the southern and northern Kōlāttiris. The upholders of this theory point to the actual chronogram, 'ā-chārya-vaga-bhē-dya' which corresponds to the commencement of the Kollam Era. The literal meaning of the chronogram is that the Āchārya's decree is unalterable. The Keralōlpatti adds that Śaṅkarāchārya prescribed rules of conduct for the guidance of the entire body of Malayāḷi Brahmins of Kerala.<sup>8</sup> Mr. A. Krishna Pisharodi goes a step further and asserts that soon after Śaṅkarāchārya's death in A.D. 823, the king of Quilon convened a conference of all the chiefs of Kerala and decided to enforce the new social code enunciated by the Āchārya and that the Kollam Era was established in commemoration of this decision.<sup>9</sup> But the premises on which he formulates such a facile theory are by no means clear.

As against this view, it must be observed that, excepting Śaṅkarasmṛiti, which is unquestionably a later work, there is hardly any other source advertizing to Śaṅkarāchārya's imposition of injunctions on people of any caste. Even if

Śaṅkarāchārya had introduced such regulations, it is by no means plausible to hold that it justified the inauguration of a new era. Moreover, there is the insuperable difficulty of associating 'Kollam tōn̄i' with the promulgation of ordinances in respect of a caste.

A theory which connects 'Kollam Tōn̄i' with the genesis of the new era is that which describes the advent to Kollam of the Christian merchant Karuvan Sapīr Isōdatapriayi<sup>10</sup> and the rise of Kollam as a commercial town. It would appear from the Kottayam Plates of Sthāṇu Ravi that Maruvan Sapīr Isō founded the town of Kollam and constructed in it the Church called Tarisappalli. Apparently Sapīr Isō built factories and warehouses as well as houses for his followers and erected a church for their worship. These were done with the approval and under the patronage of the king who granted several privileges to Sapīr Isō and his retinue. The solicitude on the part of the Kerala ruler for the commercial prosperity of the kingdom may account for the liberal concessions granted for trading colonists.<sup>11</sup>

The plates seem to have been engraved about the middle of the 9th century A.D., some years after the settlement of Sapīr Isō.<sup>12</sup> However, this does not provide any incongruity. The formal recording of the conferment of rights and privileges might have taken place at a later date suited to the convenience of Aiyan Adigal, Rāman Tiruvadigal and the Kōyil Adhikārigal who were all parties to the deed.

Normally the advent of foreign merchants or the erection of factories or churches would not have justified the establishment of a new era.<sup>13</sup> The impetus which the settlement

of merchants was expected to give for commerce a place favourably situated for it, was no doubt an important factor. But the more significant circumstance is that Maruvan Sapīr Isōdathapirayi is specifically stated in the Kottayam Plates as having founded the town of Kollam.<sup>14</sup>

However, attempts have been made to show that Kollam was an emporium of trade long before the rise of the Kollam Era. Mr. A. Krishna Pisharodi tries in vain to prove that Kollam was a flourishing town as early as the days of Śilappadikāram. In fact there is no reference to Kollam anywhere in the entire classic.<sup>15</sup> Nor is any mention made of it by the early Greek geographers; Pliny, the author of the Periplus of the Erythrean Sea, and Ptolemy are all silent about it. while they specify the adjoining ports.<sup>16</sup>

It is stated that reference is made to Kollam in the records of the Tāng dynasty of China. But this dynasty ruled in China between A.D. 618 and 907, and there is no indication as to when Kollam was known to them. Nor is it relevant to speak of the testimony afforded by 'Unṇunilisandēśam' regarding the early commercial intercourse between China and Quilon, for that work belongs to about the 14th century A.D.

Perhaps it took some days before the communication regarding the establishment of the new era reached the northern part of Kerala. That seems to be the appropriate explanation why the northerners reckoned the new era from the commencement of the next month i.e. from the 1st of Kanni. As Mr. T. A. Gopinatha Rao has rightly pointed out, the difference in the actual commencement of the era between South and North Kerala indicates that the genesis of the era was neither political nor religious.<sup>17</sup>

A piece of information has come to light which lends support to the view that the era was in all probability instituted in commemoration of the rise of Kollam. It is learnt that Naralōkavīra, the reputed general of Kulōttunga Chōla I, in the course of his subjugation of the rebellion of the southern powers, attacked and destroyed Kollam and that in commemoration of that triumph established a new era called the ‘Kollam aljinda āñdu.’ This must have occurred about Śaka 1019 (A. D. 1096-7) as is indicated by the following circumstance. The Pāñyan Chronicle refers to an army which came from Delhi in the month of Āvāñi of the year ‘Rudhirōdgari’ corresponding to Śaka 1246 which was equivalent to 227 of an unknown era reckoned from the destruction of Kollam. Working backwards, we find that the destruction of Kollam which provided the inducement for the commencement of the new era must have taken place in Śaka 1019 (A. D. 1096-7).<sup>19</sup> It looks plausible that this general’s temptation to commemorate his destruction of the town by the inauguration of a new era would have arisen from the circumstance that he was well aware of the fact that the era then current at the place had owed its origin to the foundation of Kollam. Thus the discovery of this datum strengthens the natural interpretation of ‘Kollam Tōngi’ in respect of the genesis of the Kollam Era.

Nor is there any room for doubt regarding the fact that the Kollam Era was called after the town of Kollam. A clear proof of this is found from the circumstances that Kollam (Quilon) was called Kołumbum<sup>20</sup> and that the Kollam Era was known in Sanskrit as the ‘Kołamba Varsha.’<sup>21</sup>

In the light of this view that the Kollam Era appeared with the rise of Kollam, certain other theories, besides those mentioned earlier, recede into the background. Some writers have suggested that the Kollam Era is connected with Ḷōnam, the annual national festival of Kerala. The old Malayālī

practice of referring to the days prior to Ḷoṇam as belonging to the previous year is stated to be indicative of this. Mr. Logan says: "In the title deeds, horoscopes and other writing in North Kerala, the year is still sometimes written as having ended on the day preceding the Tiruvōṇam day."<sup>22</sup>

Mr. P. Krishnan Nair, lately of the Madras University, holds<sup>23</sup> that the inauguration of the new Era occurred on the Tiruvōṇam day of August, A. D. 825. The traditional use in Malabar of the expressions 'pōkku Chiṅgam' and 'pukku Chiṅgam' denoting the year expired and the year current respectively, is stated to reinforce this suggestion. Later this cumbrous process of reckoning was given up and the southern people adopted the 1st of Chiṅgam as their New Year Day, while those of North Kerala adopted 1st of Kanni as theirs, probably because they thought it improper to reckon the new year before the dawn of the Tiruvōṇam day.

However, as an explanation of the origin of the new era, these theories connecting it with Tiruvōṇam are not convincing. From early times Tiruōṇam was considered a sacred day for the Hindus, especially for the Vaishṇavites. It is difficult to understand why an era should have been set up in its honour at any specific year. Moreover, if that era happened to be associated with Tiruvōṇam, it is inexplicable why it was called the Kollam Era.

Prof. Sundaram Pillai attempted another explanation. He was inclined to think that the Kollam Era was nothing but an adaptation of an older era called Saptarshi or Sāstrasamvatsara which was in usage in North India. The Saptarshi era may be said to correspond with its Kollam counterpart if the hundreds in the number of years are omitted from the former one. He explains also the disparity in time between North and South Kerala in respect

of the commencement of the Kollam Era. In order to make the new era a purely solar one it had to be begun in Chingam, whereas the Saptarshi era which was a luni-solar one, commenced in Mesha. But the astronomers of North Kerala differed from those of the South regarding the number of months to be left out, and therefore it happened that while the South began the era on the 1s of Chingam, the North began it on the first of Kanni.

Ingenious as the entire explanation is, it seems far-fetched. True, there is nothing inherently improbable in the adoption of a northern era, especially because the Nambūdiris, who later became the dominant people in Kerala, had emigrated from the north. But, here again, the difficulty is the failure to explain why the era was called after Kollam. The circumstance that the venue of the conference was Kollam can hardly be accepted as a convincing explanation of the name of the era. Nor does Prof. Sundaram Pillai's explanation of the omission of the hundreds in the numerals of the older era appear plausible.

Much less acceptable is the view of Dr. Gundert who has suggested that the Kollam Era was instituted in commemoration of the erection of a Śiva temple at Quilon.<sup>24</sup> Obviously this event was not of such an epochmaking nature as to merit the inauguration of a new era.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the temple, however great, could not have comprised the whole of Kollam. If the era appeared in honour of the temple, normally the deity's name would have figured in its designation. Mr. T. A. Gopinatha Rao rightly points out that the circumstance that the era came into vogue one month earlier in the south indicates that the era commemorated nothing religious or national; if it were so, the 1st day of the year would have been the same for the whole of Kerala.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, everything considered,<sup>27</sup> it would appear that the correct view regarding the genesis of the Kollam Era is that which directly explains 'Kollam Tōnri.'<sup>28</sup> This suggestion has been reinforced by the fact that about two centuries subsequent to the rise of the Kollam Era there appeared the 'Kollam Alinda'<sup>29</sup> era commencing from the date of the destruction of Kollam. When only about two hundred and fifty years had elapsed after the rise of the Kollam Era the people of the region would have in all probability remembered its genesis. Naturally Naralōkavīra might have been tempted to found another era associated with the same Kollam. Thus it appears that both the eras, 'Kollam Tōnri' and 'Kollam Alinda,' are connected with the city of Kollam, the one denoting its rise and the other, its fall.

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## NOTES

1. Visscher has mentioned it over 200 years ago in his 'Letters from Malabar'. See letter No. 25.
2. K. P. P. Menon marshals in the course of a long but discursive account (*History of Kerala*, Vol. I, pp. 435-67) the grounds against the reliability of the tradition.
3. Perhaps the legend has emerged as a result of the mixing up of the early Buddhist conversion of Bāṇaperumāl with the much later Muslim conversion of a Zamorin. See Day: *Land of the Perumāls*, p. 365 and Briggs: *Ferishta*, Vol. IV, pp. 531-3.
4. Rowland's Translation of *Tofutul-Mujahideen*, pp. 84-5.
5. Ibid. p. 55.
6. In this connection it is important to remember that there was in vogue in Kerala a Chēramān Perumāl Era itself, the initial year of which was 826-7 A.D., thus corresponding to Kollam year 3. Perhaps this era was founded in memory of his ascension to Heaven. See K. V. Krishna Aiyar: *The Zamorins of Calicut*, p. 76 and Day: *The Land of the Perumāls*, p. 378.
7. P. Shangunny Menon: *History of Travancore*, pp. 88-9.
8. Logan: *Malabar*, p. 240.
9. Krishna Pishāroḍī: *History of Travancore (Tiruvitāṅkūr Charitam)*, p. 22.
10. T. A. S., Vol. II pp. 60-86.
11. Similar rights and honours were conferred on the mercantile corporation, Maṇigramam, by the Chēra Emperor, Bhāskara Ravivarman. See *Madras Journal of Literature and Science* Vol. XIII, pp. 507 ff.

12. Mr. I. Kunjan Pillai has shown on the basis of a document obtained from the Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras, that Sthānu Ravi's accession to the throne should have taken place in A.D. 844, and that the plate under consideration belonged to 848-49 M.E. See his "Chila Kēraļacharitṛa prasnaṅga]" Part II, pp. 9-12.
13. T. K. Velu Pillai : Travancore State Manual, Vol. II p. 53. But the Puduvaippu Era is known to have been begun to commemorate no greater event than this. See T. A. S. Vol. II p. 78.
14. "Innagaram Kaṇḍu Nirēṭra" in this context means 'Having founded and accepted the sacred water'. Mr. I. Kunjan Pillai's translation is palpably incorrect. See his 'Chila Kēraļacharitṛa Prasanaṅga], Part II, p. 23 n. 5.
15. See Mr. A. Krishna Pisharodi's Article in the Ḏepam Special Number of "Māṭru Bhūmi", 1954. It is only the commentator Aḍiyārkuṇallār who refers to Kollam in the course of his description of the extent of Tamil Nādu. But Aḍiyārkuṇallār unquestionably belongs to a later age than 9th century A.D.
16. Mr. T. K. Velu Pillai burkes the issue when he writes "Centuries before the beginning of the Christian Era, the Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Egyptians and Chinese had numerous trade settlements on the Malabar coast, of which one of the most important was Quilon". State Manual, Vol. II p. 53. Mr. Pillai does not show any evidence to prove that Quilon or Kollam was one of the trade settlements. But none of the foreign writers has mentioned Kollam or Quilon.
17. T. A. S. Vol. II p. 79.
18. Taylor: Historical Manuscripts, Vol. I, p. 203.
19. I am indebted to the late Dr. N. Venkataramanayya for this piece of information. See his 'Muslim Expansion in South India,' p. 71.
20. Jordanus (1328) speaks of this town as Koṭambum. Vide letter of Pope John XXII to the Christians of Quilon.

21. "The Tirukkaṇamkuḍi Inscription of 1468-69" A.D., I. A, Vol. II p. 360. The view held by some that 'Kollam Tōṇji' has no reference to the town but to the Era itself seems unacceptable. By no stretch of imagination could the word Kollam have originally meant the Era. Prof. Sundaram Pillai thinks that 'Kollam' might have meant a seaport or emporium of trade. Col. Yule tries to connect it with Koḷambam meaning 'black pepper'. Dr. Caldwell struggles to associate it variously with 'Kōlam' meaning beauty, 'Kolu' signifying royal presence and 'Kol' denoting killing or slaughter. Though it is correct, one thing is clear; it did not originally signify era or year.
22. Logan: Malabar, Vol. I, p. 150.
23. Proceedings of the IXth Oriental Conference, 1937 - Paper on 'Tiru Ḷṇam and the Kollam Era'.
24. Dr. Gundert's Lexicon, s. v. Kollam.
25. Prof. Sundaram Pillai's criticism of this view is sound; See I.A. Vol. XXVI, p. 116.
26. T. A. S. Vol. II, p. 79.
27. The early inscriptions dated in this era begin with 'Kollam Tōṇji... yāṇḍu' which obviously means the year after Kollam appeared. The earliest epigraph so far discovered which is dated in the Kollam Era is the Māmballī Plate of 149 M.E. See T.A.S. Vol. IV, p. 9.
28. An unhistoric view advanced by the Commentator, Deivachchilayār, is that earlier, there existed one Kollam to the south of Kumari river and that when it was devoured by the sea, the people went and founded a new Kollam to the north of the river Kumari. This is incorrect because Kollam was situated far away to the north of the so-called Kumari river. It is surprising that T. V. Sadashiva Pandarattar approves it. (Kalvetṭuka] Kūṭum Uṇmaikal), 1977, p. 66.
29. Kulōttunga I is stated to have conferred on Naralōkavira, his general, the title 'Kollam Alitta Kandan' in honour of his having destroyed Kollam.

## XVII. The Temple as a Cultural Centre

The Hindu temple, like the religion which it represents, has had a long history. Its genesis has been a matter of controversy, some tracing it to the burial site, others to the hero-stones of old, and so on. There is no doubt that in pre-historic times the worship of images in the open, possibly under trees, preceded the erection of temples. Though image worship was common among the people of the Indus valley culture of old, and though they had attained a remarkable measure of progress in the art of building, there is little evidence to show that temples as such had been erected by them. The worship of Mother Goddess, of a male god seated in a *yoga*-posture, probably the proto-type of the later Śiva, as well as the worship of the phallus seem to have been in vogue. But the relics in the sites in which they were discovered do not suggest that they had been enshrined. However, the very fact that they were found among the ruins of destroyed cities does not warrant a definite conclusion as to whether they had been enshrined or not.

Again, during the Vēdic period, temples are not known to have existed ; there is no reference in the Vēdas to worship in temples. Nature worship and adoration of personified elements of Nature, with or without the accompaniment of sacrifices, must have taken place in the open for quite a long time. With the development of settled life and progress in the arts and crafts, temples might have appeared in the age of the Mantrās and of the Epics.

By the 4th century B.C., the cults of Śiva and Viṣhṇu, and particularly of Krishṇa, had taken distinct shape and

worship in enshrined temples appears to have become popular in and around Mathura. An inscription near Udaipūr in Rajputana, belonging to about 150 B. C., speaks of a temple of Vāsudēva. Erection of temples seems to have received an impetus about the dawn of the Christian era through the Mahāyanist influence. The rock-cut chaityas of the 2nd and 1st centuries B. C., must have served as models for the Hindus to construct their own shrines. We have specific mention of Hindu temples in the 1st century A.D. Temples to Gauri are mentioned in the *Saptasati*, compiled by Hāla, the 17th Sātavāhana king who ruled in the first quarter of the first century A. D.

In the extreme south of India temples are known to have existed in the Śāngam age, commonly assigned to the early centuries of the Christian era. The reference to the shrine of 'Mukkatchelvan' is unquestionably to that of Śiva, notwithstanding the doubts expressed by some. Śenkaṇān who lived towards the close of the Śāngam epoch, is reputed to have built 70 temples of Śiva. It is notable that the temple and the palace are both indicated in Tamil by one and the same word 'Kōil'.

In North and Central India the early structures were either rock-cut temples or those built of wood. In the South, for quite a long time they were constructed only of wood or of bricks and mortar. These early patterns continued till the Western Chālukyas employed stone for the purpose. However, the systematic construction of stone temples began in the South with Mahēndravarman I, the Pallava king known as "Vichitrachitta". In fact, he himself has expressed that he took a delight in the construction of temples without the use of brick, timber, metals or mortar.

Temples became very popular from the 7th and 8th centuries onwards with the development of the Bhakti movement. Kings and wealthy men vied with each other in the

construction of and endowments to temples. The golden age of temple construction was the period of the Imperial Chōlas when the magnificent temple of Tanjore and that of Gaigai-kondachōlapuram appeared along with several others. The tradition of constructing and embellishing temples was continued by the later Pāṇḍyas, the Vijayanagar emperors and the Nāyak rulers. After the 18th century the construction of huge temples received a set-back in the South with the appearance of the struggle between the Western powers for supremacy and the final establishment of British sovereignty. But the remarkable feature of the history of Hindu temples is that in South India they have not suffered much from the ravages of invaders and iconoclasts, with the result that as compared with the rest of India, the South has fortunately preserved its old temples intact.

It is important to realise that the Hindu pantheon, no less than the style of construction, was a product of the admixture of features developed by various races. There is evidence of the fusion of the Dravidian, Proto-Āustrolōid and Āryan elements. The controversy over the genesis of Śiva worship apart, there is no doubt that Muruga and Korravai became transformed into Subrahmanya and Durgā respectively. The practice of having Mithuna sculptures and paintings in temples is probably traceable to Graeco-Roman influence and to Tāntric Buddhism. Under the Jain and Buddhistic influence the practice of offering animal sacrifices ended in the Hindu temples as well.

In due course the temple became the pivot of the village. With the popularisation of temple worship by the Nayanmārs and Ālvārs its importance attained a great height. The Bhakti movement laid stress on the idea of a personal god and the emotional appeal made by the movement to devotional prayers had a profound influence in

making it popular. Almost every one in the village offered worship at specified times in the temple, while on occasions of special celebrations and festivals, people from far and near used to throng the temples.

The temple became not only a place of worship but the very focus of the entire life of the people of a village. It has been rightly said of Hindu temples that, they were fortresses, treasuries, court-houses, parks, fairs, exhibition sheds, halls of learning and of pleasure, all in one." Several temples have afforded protection for people against marauders and invaders. In various ways temples have proved themselves as agents of poor relief. As landholder, consumer of goods and services and as employer and in short as the focus of social life and development, the temple of medieval times has played a unique role. Above all, the temple as well as the Maṭha attached to it served as the centre of cultural and educational activity.

What is culture? Perhaps it is one of the over-worked and much-abused words of modern times. In fact, in the name of culture, most uncultured things are done and uncultured ideas are expressed. Though it is not easy to provide a simple and comprehensive definition of culture, its outstanding features may be mentioned. Intellectual attainment thorough knowledge and an intellectual awareness and curiosity are fundamental elements of culture. Besides, culture has intimate relation to social habits and customs, behaviour and morals. In fact, culture has a direct bearing on the way of life as well as on the outlook on life. A person's culture is obviously influenced by one's parentage, social environment and positive scope for self-improvement provided by education and training. It is in respect of these latter facilities that the temple has proved to be a centre of culture.

In the first place, devotees congregating in a temple for worship normally subject themselves to a certain measure of physical and mental discipline. Personal cleanliness, including the taking of baths before going to the temple and the wearing of clean clothes are aids to physical discipline. Fasts on particular days or at specified times of certain sacred days serve as auxiliaries to discipline. More important is the mental cleanliness and the scope for concentration and meditation. True, there is no ostensible test by which these can be measured. They are essentially internal and psychic in character. But by and large, other things being equal, the worshippers have a greater chance for developing these qualities than others.

More positive is the facility for education that the temple provided. During the period when other public agencies like the State had not begun to shoulder the educational responsibility it was primarily the temple and *maṭha* which provided the facility for education. Many are the inscriptions of medieval times that speak of the educational facilities provided by temples.

Epigraphs at Tiruvorriyūr speak of the recital and teaching of Prabhākara (*mīmāṃsā*), Rudra, Yāmaṇa, Purāṇa, Śivadharma, and Bhārata. Besides sacred literature, even subjects like Vyākaraṇa (Grammar) and Astrology were taught. Again the celebrated inscription of Rājēndra Chōla at Ennāyiram registers an endowment for the maintenance of a college for Vēdic studies. At Puravaśsēri near Śuchindram there is found an inscription belonging to 1196 A. D. which registers a gift of land as *kiḍaivritti* for maintaining two teachers to expound the Ṛg and Yajur Vēdas. The famous epigraph of Vīra Rājēndra at Tirumukkūḍal refers to a school maintained in the Jñāna Maṇḍapa in the temple for the study of the Vēdas, Sāstras, Grammar etc. Usually in a spacious Maṇḍapa

which could accommodate a large gathering of people, a prominent scholar chanted hymns of the Vēdas and expounded them to his ardent listeners. In another Maṇḍapa, the celebrated epic Mahābhārata, which has moulded the life and character of the Hindus for ages, was read and explained to the people. The Dharmāśāstras, embodying the rules of right conduct, the Purāṇas, Grammar, Rhetoric, Logic, Astronomy, Medicine and other special sciences were taught to those who thronged to learn them.

The Ghaṭikās and Maṭhas provided systematic training to pupils in sacred lore. The Ghaṭikās of Kāñchi were perhaps the most outstanding institutions of the kind in South India. Still further south we hear of Śālais which were really residential halls of learning. The Śālai of Miñchiṛai, the Śrivallabhapurumchālai at Kanyākumari and the celebrated Kāndaḷūr Śālai are known to have served as schools of religious learning. For the Śālais provision of a regular income was made from time to time by kings and other wealthy patrons. The identification of Kāndaḷūr Śālai has been a subject of acute controversy. Most of the South Indian scholars have taken it to mean the harbour at Kāndaḷūr and that the mention of it in Chōla inscriptions indicates a naval victory off the portstead of Kāndaḷūr. But the other interpretation that it referred to a residential hall of learning seems more appropriate. The context in which it occurs and the lines succeeding the reference to Kāndaḷūr Śālai suggests that it was an institute of learning where free food was provided for scholars. The inscription of Parāntaka Pāṇḍya, for example, makes it clear :

1. ஸ்வஸ்திரங்கு திருவளர்ச் செயம் வளர  
தென்னவர் தம்குலம் வளர,  
அருமறை நான்கஞ்சி வளர

வணத்துலகுஞ் துயர்நீங்கத்  
தென்மதுரா புரித்தோன்றி  
தேவேந்திர ஞேடினிதிரு

2. ந்து, மன்னர்பிரான் வழுதியர்கோன்  
வடிம்பலம்ப நின்றருளி,  
மால்கடலை எறித்தருளி  
மலையத்துக் கயல்பொறித்துச்  
சேரலனைச் செருவில் வென்று  
திரைகொண்டு வாகை தூடிக் கூப்
3. கர் கோன் மகட்குடுப்பக்  
குல விழிருங் கைக் கொண்டு  
கன்னிப்போர் செய்தருளிக்  
காந்தனூர் சாலை கலமறுத்து  
மன்னுபுகழ் மறையவர்தம்  
மணியம்பலத்திருங்தருளி ஆங்கவர்களாற்
4. ம் வளர்ப்ப அமைத்த பேராயிரத்தென்மர்  
அவிரோதம் பணிப்பணியால்  
மறைபோர்த்துக் கல்நாட்டிப்  
பண்டுள்ளபேர் தவிர் த்து  
அளப்பனவும் முகப்பனவும்  
நிறுப்பனவும் கயலெழுதி அனந்தபூங் தெம்மாற்கு

It seems that 'Kalamaruttal' does not refer to the destruction of a fleet but the provision for the feeding of a fixed number of persons. Kalam stands for '*unkalam*,' figuratively plates and really the amount of rice for feeding an allotted number of persons—here a specified number of Brāhmin scholars. The reference to 'Ayirattenmar' makes it clear that 1008 persons were the permanent members of that institute of learning. Apparently Kāndalūr Śālai was something like an University, similar to those we hear of in Northern India, such as those at Taxila, Nalanda or Vikramashila. This

seat of learning was so important that the kings of the three famous dynasties—the Chēra, Chōla and Pāṇḍya vied with each other in securing possession of the celebrated place.

That the Śalai at Kanyākumari was another hall of learning or hostel for scholars is evident from several inscriptions. For example, the following epigraphic reference proves this :

“ இவ்வுர் ராஜராஜன் சாலை க்கு  
சாலாபோகமான ஊர்கள் ”

Again : “ குமரி ராஜராஜன் சாலையின் சாலா  
போகம் நாஞ்சிநாட்டு மணற்குடி  
ஊரோங் கைத்தீட்டு ”

The scholars were called Śatīar—“ராஜ ராஜேஷ்வரத்துச் சட்டப்பெருமக்கள் வசம் ஆண்டாண்டு தோறும் இந் நெல்லு அழக்கக் கடவோமாக இசைந்து இக்காசவொண்ட மணற்குடி ஊரோம்” . . . and so on.

That ‘Kalam’ denoted the share of each for the provision of food is clear from several inscriptions. For example, an epigraph of the 14th year of Kulōttunga speaks of ‘அமுது செய்யக் கற்பித்த கலம்’.

It is true that the education provided in the ghaṭikās and temples was almost exclusively for Brāhmins; but that was in pursuance of the prevalent traditions of the day. It is unfair to condemn age-long practices in the light of modern ideas. Nevertheless, it is true that every society must necessarily change if it is to survive; however, change should not mean a violent break with the past, but a new synthesis of past wisdom and present needs.

It may be observed that in temples and mathas of old, apart from instruction provided for Brāhmins, there was also scope for popular education in a limited measure. In many of the South Indian temples recitations and expositions of the Epics and the Purāṇas took place.

There is inscriptional evidence to show that the practice was in vogue in the temples at Tiruvorriyūr, Eñpāyiram, Tirumukkūḍal and Tirubhuvani. In the West Coast temples too, it was not unknown. We find at Tirukkadittānam an inscription of Bhāskara Ravi Varman, assignable to the last decade of the 10th century A.D., which mentions the practice of reciting the Mahābhārata.

Another institution of popular religious instruction was through the recitation of Tamil hymns before the deities at stated times. The practice of singing the Tiruppadigam, i.e., hymns of the Dēvāram, Tiruvāchakam and Tiruppallāṇḍu was in vogue in South India clearly from the 10th century onwards and possibly from a slightly earlier date. The practice of chanting Tiruppadigams must have commenced as early as the reign of the Pallava King Vijay Nandi Vikrama Varman. This is evident from the Tiruvallam inscription, which enumerates the reciters of the Tiruppadigam among the employees of the temple. From the reign of Parāntaka Chōla I onwards numerous inscriptions speak of endowments made for the recitation of Tiruppadigam and Tiruvāymoḷi. It appears to have been systematised by Rāja Rāja I who was a great organizer of the practices and celebrations in the South Indian Temples. An epigraph of Rājendra I mentions a ‘Dēvāranāyakan,’ apparently a Superintendent of Dēvāram. This indicates the existence of a department of State which supervised and controlled the performance of this service in various temples.

Discourses and discussions on religious themes seem to have been held in temples or mathas. A piece of very early evidence of religious discourse is found from the Amarāvati sculptures where a vast concourse of people is shown listening to what was apparently a disquisition. Even women are found to have attended the discourse. In much later times discourses among the exponents of the different religions of Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism appear to have been held in temples and Mathas. These were common in the days of the Nāyanmārs and the Ālvārs. During the medieval period of South Indian history discourses were generally held in the Mathas. These were not confined to brāhmins only. Members of the higher sections of the non-brāhmin communities also participated in them.

There is another respect in which the moral conduct of the brāhmins as well as of others were influenced by the temple. Vows were taken in front of the temple; the idea was that divine sanctity was attached to such vows. In respect of quite a large number of people who took vows, adherence to the right code of moral conduct would have been a motive force.

Besides sacred literature and devotional songs, music and dance formed a part of the Nityōtsavas or the daily services. These appeared prominently during the special celebrations and annual festivals. Almost every big temple maintained its own permanent staff of musicians, vocal and instrumental. Numerous types of musical instruments were in use. Among musical instruments employed in temples, mention is made in inscriptions of Yāl or Viṇai, Kuṇai, Uḍukkai, Kuḍamula, Kalam as well as Mattalam, Karaḍigai, Segandi, Kaimani, Parai and Śaṅgu. Here is ample evidence to show that teachers of music and dancing, the Naṭṭuvanārs as they

are called, were employed by the authorities of the temple to instruct the Dēvadāsis in these arts. Invariably the best musicians, pipers and drummers as well as dancers of the region were enrolled and maintained by the temples. It is no exaggeration to say that these arts owe their development to the temples and royal courts.

Finally, the arts of architecture, sculpture, and painting attained a remarkable progress only in and through the temples. In India, as in ancient Greece, art was the handmaid of religion. The temple was verily the epitome of the architectural and sculptural attainments of the bygone ages. Carving both on metal and wood reached a high degree of progress. Images in bronze, silver and gold were skilfully carved. The Chōla Bronzes are world-famous. Painting was developed not only in Buddhist chaityas and vihāras but also in Hindu temples.

The temple was an instructive and cultural institution in which people from all walks of life—the architect, the sculptor, the painter, the dancer and the musician, the philosopher and the religious man, the Pauranika, and the poet, each found his place.

The painting on the walls, panelled-ceiling, and gateways of some of the temples show scenic representations of the Rāmāyaṇa as at Kumbakōṇam (Kudandai and Tellicherry (Talaśsēri) or stories from the Mahābhāratha as depicted in the wooden ceiling at Vaikom, Crānganore and other temples of Kēralā, and in others in Tamil Nādu and Āndhra Pradēsh. Many temples had spacious halls where the Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas were expounded. For example, the Kūram grant states that a Brāhmaṇa cholar was appointed to recite the Mahābhārata inside the

maṇḍapa of the temple of Vidyavinita Pallavēśvara at the village of Paramēśvaramaṅgalam.

Most of the temples had also well trained choirs of singers who brought home to the people the best music, literature and religious devotion of the land. Dance performances were also witnessed within the temple precincts, in the spacious Rāga Maṇḍapas in the larger South Indian temples.

Temples are generally treasure-houses of sculpture and iconography. Silpa Śāstra emphasises the idea that the worship of images of stone, metal, jewels or clay leads the seeker of liberation from rebirth to his goal.

#### *Decline of the position and service of the temple*

Though the formal services provided by the temple are continued to this day it is an unquestionable fact that the temple has suffered in its prestige and appeal so far as the bulk of the people are concerned. There are fewer persons going to the temple and offering worship there than before. There is an atmosphere of apathy, scepticism and even of contempt for the age-long practices and beliefs. The beginnings of these heretical tendencies are traceable to the century when western tradition and western ideas penetrated the land. The age-long veneration and respect for established beliefs and practices witnessed a serious challenge. Many educated people become indifferent to the traditional beliefs while they fail to absorb the really valuable ideas of the West.

One of the important reasons for the growing apathy has been the migration of people from villages to towns and cities. Western education, together with the changed nature of the employment market drew people to urban areas, particularly, the intelligentsia from the villages. The spread

of certain new ideas and the contact with the westerners and the realisation of the advances of Science accounted for increasing scepticism. It cannot but be admitted that the activities of the Christian Missionaries openly and otherwise promoted an irreligious attitude among Hindus.

Above all in quite recent times certain political parties have turned against the Hindu religion and its sacred institution, namely the temple. This is, to say the least, most unfortunate. Communal difference may exist especially in the employment field but that need not be prostituted to rouse antipathy to religion as a whole. Hatred of a particular community need not and should not pave the way for atheism. One can understand true atheism arising out of deep study and contemplation; the great Buddha was one of the early atheists. But here the position is different. Lack of initial faith has been worked up to a wholesale condemnation of all that stands on faith. One need not believe in miracles. Which religion in the world is devoid of faith in miracles? But it should be realized that there are different ways of approach to godhood which may vary from individual to individual and from class to class. It is cruel to drive masses of unthinking people into the abyss of apathy, in order to subserve personal or communal ends.

Further, Hinduism stands far above Brāhmanism. The mere circumstance that the priesthood is composed of Brahmins or that the sacred lore is Brāhmanical in character, does not make Hinduism co-eval with Brāhminism. Hinduism is much wider and more comprehensive; it derives its original source from elements outside the Brāhmanical fold as well; its genesis is traceable, largely though to Brāhmanism, also to Dravidian concepts and practices, proto-Āstrolōid beliefs and other non-Āryan elements. In this connection it is important to remember that the South Indian temple resembles not only

in its structure but also in its organisation the Sumerian temple. The Dēvadāsi system, the annual Tirukkalyāṇam and other features found in the South Indian Temples have their counterpart in the Sumerian organisation of temples. Even among people connected with the temples directly or otherwise normally 70 per cent of the people were persons other than brāhmaṇins as may be seen from numerous inscriptions, for example, from Rājendra Chōla I's epigraph at Kōlār regarding the various classes of servants employed in a Dūrga temple. Hence those, out for decrying Āryanism or Brāhmanism, whatever the justification, should keep the South Indian temple from out of their targets of attack.

But the real danger is the passivity and indifference of the average Hindu, the brāhmaṇin included. The external observances are forgotten while the internal or psychic approach to religion is either unknown or is not developed. True, temple-worship may not be needed for those who are spiritually ripe; but in reality, we have more often than not, neither the one nor the other.

In fact we are faced with apathy, scepticism and absorption in materialism. This ought to be arrested if Hinduism is to survive. There is no use of deluding ourselves into the belief that Hinduism is strong enough to overcome these petty onslaughts and minor dangers. In fact we are passing through a critical phase of our history in relation to religion and those who believe in the appearance of avatārs to overcome crisis can well feel that such a stage has come very near. A Śankara or Rāmānuja, a Rāmakrishna Paramahamsa or Vivekānanda, a Gandhiji or Aurobindo has to emerge and stem this tide of heresy and apathy.

What is to be done really in order to strengthen the faith in the temple and thereby promote not only piety but also our distinctive culture? A high-power Commission, the

Hindu Religious Endowments Commission, is touring the country and collecting evidence concerning the ways and means of rejuvenating the service in temples, the improvement of the training and equipment of the archakas and so on. From the newspapers it is learnt that some witnesses have suggested the creation of institutions for providing archakas with systematic training in āgamas and pūjās; others have recommended the conducting of religious discourses and preaching by competent persons, while still others have counselled the opening of Colleges giving both secular and religious instruction to pupils. Laudable as these suggestions are, could they be expected to rejuvenate our religion, to infuse enthusiasm among temple-goers and to induce others to develop the age-old habits of worshipping at temples and performing the religious duties enjoined on each of us by custom and tradition? There is no use singing of our past glory; the present deterioration must be faced and the prospects of a bright future ensured. Discourses may attract but a few. Dēvāram schools also cannot expect to have large numbers of students. Nor would Colleges where religious and secular instruction is provided attract many, even with the bait of scholarships. In an age sunk in gross materialism only that school or college which would provide an opening for employment would be sought. In reality the starting of colleges which can provide a secular and religious instruction should be preceded by an alteration in the curricula of studies. As a preliminary step it may be suggested that *Hindu hostels* can be started, largely with the aid of funds from temples. The residents would have to bear a large part of the expenses themselves; but provision for religious instruction may be made from out of the temple funds. The principal aim should be to offer religious instruction and afford training for a disciplined life. Strikes should be banned and those who indulge in strikes should

be totally expelled. But the cynic is sure to scoff at this counsel of perfection.

At the very outset the problem of admission to the hostels would face the authorities. I would straightaway say that membership must be open to all deserving Hindus irrespective of caste. This may be a revolutionary step but it has to be adopted in order to provide for the solidarity of the Hindu fold.

The conditions of admission, the choice of suitable wardens and proctors who must be ideal Hindus in the true sense of the term are all problems bristling with difficulties. But a firm determination to serve the future of the Hindu community and to make it regain its vast glory and culture may, God-willing, help the cause. What temple of old provided has now to be provided by the temple, school, college, and hostel together. Discipline is the supreme need of the hour, discipline at the school, college and in society at large. One of the devices for securing it is by reviving faith in religion and importing it into the various grades of society.

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## XVIII The Mithuna in Indian Art

It is a mystery why places of worship in India present erotic sculptures and paintings. Some of them directly, and others indirectly, are suggestive of sexual affinity. The simplest form is the representation of figures in partial or complete nudity. More positively erotic are the sculptures of amorous couples depicted in close proximity. These are of numerous varieties, including those where the male passes one arm around the neck of the spouse while the other hand toys with her chin, or where the lover softly presses the feet of his beloved. Love sports of endless patterns are depicted in temple cars. Certain sculptures of North India depict gay people engaged in drinking bouts. Voluptuous embraces and kisses apart, the more flagrant types of erotic sculptures include representations of male and female figures engaged in different poses of sexual act. Lastly, there are grotesque manifestations of sexual frenzy exhibiting obscene and abnormal sexual freaks. A brief historic survey of this motif may throw light on the purpose with which it was introduced into temples.

Chronologically, apart from the nude figures seen among the sculptures of Mohenjodārō and Hārappā, perhaps the earliest clear specimen of the *mithuna* motif is found in the jamb of a *tōrana*, now preserved in the Lucknow Museum. It contains the carving of a man and a woman, obviously a loving couple, standing close to each other. It is not definitely known where this *tōrana* was originally found, though tradition traces it to an old Jain site at Mathura. On the basis of its architectural style O. C. Gangoly thinks that it is assignable to the 3rd or 2nd century B.C.<sup>1</sup>

The next specimen obtained is the ‘man and woman’ medallion found on one of the railings of Bōdh Gaya, belonging to the Suṅga period (185-73 B.C.). There is another panel in Bōdh Gaya showing a prince with his arm on the neck of a lady by his side and his other hand touching the face of another lady. Probably the Sāñchi stūpa, too, contains some representations of the *mithuna* motif, but the features are not clear enough to warrant a positive assertion about them, though Marshall and Foucher are inclined to identify one carving at Sāñchi as depicting *mithuna*.<sup>2</sup>

The bas-reliefs in the old caves at Kārle and Kanheri have certain clear specimens of the *mithuna* motif. Of the couples carved on the door ways of the shrines in these caves, the woman is invariably represented as encircling the man with her left arm. Besides, each of the pillars in the Kārle caves shows an embracing couple seated on an elephant.

The Gāndhāra sculptures, traceable to the Graeco-Roman influence, which can be assigned to the dawn of the Christian Era, contain several examples of the *mithuna* motif. Here the erotic suggestion is distinctly noticeable. For one thing, nudity is a marked feature of the couples depicted here. Secondly, they are sculptured as groups enjoying drinking bouts. A piece belonging to this group, now preserved in the Lahore Museum, shows a woman offering a cup to her companion. The monuments of Mathura reveal several such Bacchanalian groups representing drinking bouts in which nude men and women participate.

Bhārhut, Amarāvati and Nāgārjunakonda have various representations of the *mithuna* motif. At Amarāvati, a prince is depicted in the gay company of women, apparently

belonging to the harem, the principal members being seated on either side of him. In Nāgārjunakonda, there is an expressive sculpture of a Nāga couple splendidly executed, the lady's face beeming with intense emotion.

The frescoes at Ajantā present *mithuna* couples in conventional poses; in several of them, the woman is found offering drink to her mate. The caves of Nāsik show *mithuna* sculptures on the door jambs of shrines. Beginning from the Gupta period, however, a change is noticed in respect of the places in the temple where such themes were carved. Besides the door jambs, the facades of temples came to be used for this purpose as is evident from a temple at Sārnāth. Moreover, it was from the Gupta times onwards that the *mithuna* theme, instead of being restricted to human couples, was extended to Apsaras and Gandharvas.

The Aihole temples of the 6th century A.D. provide striking examples of the later development of the *mithuna* motif. The figures assume a markedly erotic tone almost bordering on obscenity. The Durgā temple at Aihole contains *mithuna* couples of flying Apsaras, as well as couples of men and women, one of whom carries a wine cup. Another sculpture of the same place shows a lover excited with emotion and softly pressing a foot of his beloved. The temple of Pattadakkal repeats many of the earlier features, and besides, furnishes for the first time representations of *nāgi mithunas* or serpent couples, which figure prominently at Konarak and other places later. The intense love of the *nāgas* (serpents) is depicted by the intertwining coils binding them together in warm affection. In fact, beginning from about the 7th century A.D., there appear sculptures frequently depicting the *mithuna* motif among animals and birds. They are found, for instance, on the huge sculptured rock at Mahabalipuram which is believed to portray Arjuna's penance.

On the base of this rock there occurs the representation of a doe watching the stag as it rubs its hoof on the partner's nose. Among the panels depicting the story of the *Rāmā-yāna* at Prambanam, in Java, there occurs an interesting piece of carving which shows Rāma and Sītā having a gay time at Citrakūṭa. On the roof of the happy cottage are shown birds in pairs, one of which indicates both the birds having their beaks together, rubbing their bills and apparently cooing in expression of intense love.

Ellōra has several series of human *mithunas* in the conventional poses similar to those found in the frescoes at Ajantā. A splendid piece of art at Ellōra presents two lovers embracing each other with deep affection, probably after long separation, as the emaciated bodies and the tear-stained eyes suggest. Then, there appear the sculptures in the Bādāmi caves, among which are seen a series of pairs of '*mithunas*', two of which hold wine cups. The Bādāmi specimens are pronouncedly erotic. The top of a pillar presents lovers in enthralling embrace.

But unquestionably the most outstanding types of *mithuna* sculptures are found in Kōnārak and Khajurāho. The numerous patterns at these places are all sculptured in a rabidly voluptuous tone, and the artists seem to have given free vent to their imagination and skill. There appear also the enchanting love scenes of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. The temples of Bhuvanēśvar and Pūri share the characteristics of the Orissan temples. Although in numberless temples of the later periods all over India the *mithuna* themes appear ubiquitously, nowhere do they reach the level of the grotesquely obscene patterns furnished by Orissa. In fairness it must be added that these Orissan sculptures have all been executed with extra-ordinary skill and dexterity.

How and when this theme appeared for the first time in the Indian temples are questions of keen interest for the student of religion and art. Did it appear on the basis of any religious code or was it merely the product of a fortuitous and casual freak of human ingenuity? A few scholars who have addressed themselves to this question have quoted certain texts from the Purāṇas and Śilpaśāstras which seem to justify the *mithuna* sculptures in temples. O.C. Gangoly who makes a genuine, though not a totally successful attempt,<sup>3</sup> quotes a passage from the *Agni Purāṇa* which enjoins the prescription that "the doorway (of shrines) should be decorated with *mithunas*" (*mithunair bibhuṣyēd*). But the date of the *Agni Purāṇa* cannot be determined beyond doubt. The probability is that it appeared later than the 6th century A.D. Even if it is assumed that this prescription furnished the authority for the *mithuna* sculptures of the mediaeval times it is idle to contend that the *Agni Purāṇa* provided the original authority for the *mithuna* motif.

The same author quotes another text from the *Agni Purāṇa* in respect of the choice of a site for a temple which states that the best site is one where loving couples, human or animal, have lived, loved and bred and reared a family. Gangoly advances a hypothesis that in the absence of such sites, temple builders might have tried to make amends for the desideratum by resorting to the *mithuna* sculptures. Apart from the question of the late date of the *Agni Purāṇa* which could not be deemed to have provided the basis for the earlier appearance of this motif, Gangoly's postulate demands far too much of a stretching of the imagination.<sup>4</sup>

Gangoly, as well as Bhaṭṭāchārya who have made further attempts at discovering the probable textual authorities,<sup>5</sup>

hold that the *Agni Purāna* merely records the religious sanction for a practice which had been in vogue from a much earlier time. But Gangoly seems to admit his own doubt regarding the real value of the concerned texts from the *Agni Purāna* when he states that "the archaeological evidence clearly points to an injunction somewhere in the early literature as an auspicious precedent to be followed by all temple builders." Bhaṭṭāchārya proceeds to show that the earlier basis for the concerned texts in the *Agni Purāna* was the *Hayasīrṣa Pañcarātra*. But the date of the latter work is equally indefinite. Varāhamihira's *Brihatsamhitā*, belonging to the middle of the 6th century A.D., prescribes that 'the door jambs should be decorated with auspicious birds, svastika designs, vessels, *mithunas*, leaves, creepers and so on. It is significant to observe that Varāhamihira admits that he derived these prescriptions from Manu and others. But, not even a faint clue to this practice, much less the prescription concerning it, is traceable in the writings ascribed to Manu. Nor do we have any indication in the Vēdas justifying this practice.<sup>6</sup>

The inhibitory injunction in the *Māyāmata* and *Silparatna* that legends about Gods and Asuras, nude figures or the amorous sports of ascetics should not be sculptured or painted in the houses of people, has been misconstrued to justify these in temples. At best, this deduction is negative. Incidentally, the reference to *Tapasvīlīla* or the amorous sport of ascetic, raises interesting questions.

A prescription in the *Suprabhēdāgama* (30th Paṭala) specifically lays down: "Particularly (one should make) the figures of Śiva's sport (Śivakṛidā), of Hari's sport (Harikṛidā) and sport of the ascetics (Tapakṛidā)."<sup>7</sup> In fact, it is a striking feature that in many of the temples in Orissa, Bengal and South India the male figures sculptured in connection with

erotic scenes represent ascetics. The Brihadīśvara temple at Tanjavur, and the Śtaṇunāthaśvāmi temple at Śuchindram, to mention but a few, present this particular feature in connection with ascetics. Some of the later works like the *Tattvaprakāśa* and *Prāṇatoṣini* are said to prescribe sexual exercises as one of the means for the redemption of the yōgi and the attainment of divine ‘bi-unity’ and supreme knowledge.<sup>8</sup> It has been stated that in order to regain the primordial wholeness (*Brahmajñāna*) the yōgi practises bodily, mental and intellectual exercises and that the devotee observes these rites including *mithuna* as his means of accomplishing his final release. Apart from the principle underlying the prescription, it still passes one’s understanding why there should be *mithuna* representations of ascetics and of others in the sacred places of worship where people of all levels of mental and spiritual attainment gather. On the whole, it has to be admitted that a clear solution has not been furnished explaining the adoption of the *mithuna* motif in temples. Religious texts or philosophical explanations seem to be more in the nature of justifications of practices which had already come into vogue rather than prescriptions for the early practices.

Several popular explanations have been offered. It has been suggested, for example, (1) that the *mithuna* motif is a device adopted for the warding off of the evil eye, (2) that it serves to emphasize the ephemeral nature of the sensuous pleasures of the body in order to impress on the visitors the more lasting pleasures of the attainment of god-head; (3) that it serves to attract the voluptuous to the temple and thereby ultimately to a religious life; and (4) that it tends to warn the worshippers against the snares and pitfalls which haunt the seeker after truth. These, and other similar attempts seem to be little more than ingenious guesses, and consequently they do not deserve serious consideration.

Nor do the philosophical explanations, learned though they seem to be, furnish the specific authority for this apparently inexplicable feature in places of worship. It is stated that the *mithuna* motif serves to emphasize the unity of all dualities, the union of the *Puruṣa* and the *Prakṛiti* (Spirit and Matter) and that it shows how the male and the female powers of creation mingle converging into the cosmic centre of the great Brahman, the eternal spirit and source of all cosmic activity. The *Upaniṣad* is pressed into service in order to emphasize the divine force in the creation of mankind. Attention is drawn to the story of God, to relieve whose sickness of loneliness, He is said to have divided his own body into two parts, one part representing man and the other representing woman and to have merged himself in a sexual act and created human beings.

Another philosophical line of approach claims that *Prakṛiti*, as Supreme Śakti, is within God Himself, hidden in His own qualities and that within Him, by means of His mind, He entered into union (*mithuna*) with the unspoken word (*Vāk*).<sup>9</sup> Obviously, these are justifications based on belief. They do not explain, for example, why the temples of the Jains and Buddhists also present the *mithuna* motif.

A special application of the belief in the Unity of God, as emphasized by the *Chandōgya Upaniṣad* in order to justify the *mithuna* motif, is interesting. There is a belief in Orissa that *mithuna* figures in a building prevent it from being struck by lightning. It is held that in lightning there is seen the union of the immanent spirit of man and the transcendent spirit. "The person seen in lightning—I am He; I indeed am He".<sup>10</sup> Therefore, it is believed that no lightning will strike the building where this motif is sculptured. Whatever the truth underlying this idea, the belief operating on the fear

psychosis of people must have popularized the practice in later times; but it does not seem to provide a satisfactory explanation for the origin of the motif in other parts of India in earlier times.

Nor can all the descriptions of erotic emotions in literature be taken to provide the basic authorities for the corresponding sculptural carvings. C. Śivarāmamūrti has in a recent paper contributed to a *Memories of the Archaeological Survey* (No. 73) made a strenuous attempt at showing how the exquisitely fine descriptions of love scenes furnished by the illustrious Kālidāsa in his *Mēghadūta*, *Raghuvamśa* and other poems are portrayed accurately in many of the *mithuna* carvings. Perhaps a few of them are traceable to the poems, but certainly not all. In a laboured attempt at correlating the flights of imagination of the poet and of the sculptor, Śivarāmamūrti seems to call for a wide stretching of the imagination of the normal reader. On the other hand, it is true that where a continuous array of these erotic sculptures is found, the treatises of Vātsyāyana and other sexologists like Kōka Pandita and Kalyāṇamala appear to have exerted a great influence. The sculptures at Bhuvanēśvar constitute a complete set of illustrations of the Kāmasūtra.<sup>11</sup> But, neither the early *mithuna* sculptures nor the vast majority of the later ones indicate clear traces of the treatises like the Kāmasūtra.

The real explanation of the origin and early development of this motif in temples has to be traced to a variety of sources. In the first place, sex-worship appears to have been common in some form or other in all early religions. From time immemorial man has realized a mystic connection between sex life and all generative phenomena. Sometimes it led to the worship of symbols of sex. The belief gained ground that sexual attributes in any object of worship helped to confer the

blessings of fertility and plenty. The Indus civilization, belonging to the Chalcolithic Age, appears to have adopted phallic worship. Phallic symbols have been and are still used in the undercurrents of Shintoism in Japan. In the East Indian Archipelago, ithyphallic statues are found in considerable numbers. Among the primitive Nuforesecs of New Guinea sex worship is common. On the eastern and western sides of their temple as well as outside it, there are found two pairs of wooden statues, each in the conjugal act. In Celebes, on the posts of houses raised in honour of fallen heroes, there appear representations of women's breasts and sexual organs. The existence of temples at Langgadopi, where the organs of both sexes in sexual union are carved, is significant. The worship of Mother Goddess either in the symbolic or personified form is found ramified among many of the Semitic cults. Serpent symbolism also is supposed to typify sex. In late Rome, women carried phallic emblems in their religious processions. It is interesting to learn that the indigenous phallic God of Rome was called *Mutunus*.<sup>12</sup>

Emotion, once excited in any direction, is often diverted into another. The very strength of sexual passion renders it particularly liable to get commingled with religious fervour. Fothergill seems to assess properly the connection between the two when he writes: "We find that all religions have engaged and concerned themselves with the sexual passion; from the times of Phallic worship through Romish celibacy down to Mormonism, theology has linked itself with man's reproductive instinct."<sup>13</sup>

How did this feature emerge in India? The phallic worship, in spite of all the ingenious constructions put upon it, is in fact traceable to the tendency noticed above. The Indus Valley people were linga worshippers, if the linga-like stone cylinders are not to be interpreted otherwise. There is little evidence to show

that the Rig Vēdic Āryans were phallic worshippers. Indeed, they have made contemptuous references to the Dasyus as Siśna-worshippers. But it is significant that, by the age of the Mahābhārata, the worship of the Liṅgam and Yōni came to be recognized as sacred. Apparently, the change is to be explained by the fusion of the Āryan and non-Āryan religious practices which should have occurred during the interval. This amalgamation is perhaps the basic foothold for the rise of the *mithuna* motif.

Secondly, the Gāndhāra art, with its Graeco-Roman elements seems to have exercised an influence in the development of certain features of the *mithuna* motif. There is clear evidence to show that from the 4th century B.C., Greek art became distinctly human and individual. Praxiteles, the great Greek artist of the epoch has represented Aphrodite in her nudity; her nudity is not natural and unconscious like that of male figures in Greek art, but a motive for the strange feature is supplied in her preparation for her bath. The painters of the 4th century B.C. in Greece also chose dramatic or sensational objects and their power of rendering individual character and passion was probably connected with the features adopted by the contemporary sculptors. It is important to observe that the successors of these artists in the next generation carried the traditions of Hellenic art to the East which eventually trickled down to India.<sup>14</sup> The representation of figures associated with drinking bouts which are carved in Indian temples is probably traceable to the Bacchanalian themes portrayed in the Gāndhāra sculpture. Nudity, as well as the *mithuna* motif, is also ascribable to the same source as is found on a Greek golden ornament of the 2nd century B.C., which was discovered in Sind.<sup>15</sup> It may be recalled here that Bacchanalian scenes have been found in the decorative friezes among the ruins of stūpās and saṅgharāmas in the

ancient provinces of Gāndhāra and Udyāna. Several specimens of almost the same pattern were discovered by Sir Alexander Cunningham and presented by him to the Indian Museum in 1872-73.

Perhaps, the Buddhists who imbibed these ideas of art developed them further in their later and degenerate days; some of these voluptuous ideas of their modified religion received an impetus when monasteries degenerated into dens of vice. What is more, Tāntric cults found high favour with certain Mahāyanist sects. The aim of Tantra was to acquire control over the spirits by the practice of austerities and elaborate mystic rites, and then to use their supernatural power for the gratification of the senses, the production of potent medicines by magic, as well as salvation for the soul.<sup>16</sup> The Mahāyana practices of later days were responsible for developing the Tāntric rituals of the Vajrayāna sect, which came to be reflected in the cult of Bengal, Nepal and Tibet.

Tāntric Buddhism developed markedly erotic tendencies which were reflected in literature, sculpture and iconography.<sup>17</sup> The temples of Nepal and Tibet as well as the terracottas preserved in many of the wooden temples of Bengal, as well as the paintings and rathas in the Vaishṇavite temples of Bengal still present these features. The new-fangled practices and modes of worship of the decadent Buddhism were absorbed and assimilated by the Hindus, particularly of Eastern India. The gods and goddesses of Tāntric Buddhism became the deities of the Saiva form of Hinduism. Thus, for example, the Buddhist Tārā was identified as the Śakti or female energy of Śiva. By the 9th century A.D. the erotic element, which had reached great heights at the hands of Tāntric Buddhism, crept into the Hindu system.<sup>18</sup>

Meanwhile, Hindu writers like Vātsyāyana and Kālidāsa exercised an indirect but potent influence, and the cumulative effect of it all was the free and diversified adoption of the *mithuna* motif. Besides, *Purāṇas* like the *Agni Purāṇa* and works like the *Hayaśīrṣa Pañcarāṭra* appeared which accorded sanction to the adoption of the *mithuna* motif which had already found its way. Under the cumulative influence of all these circumstances, the epoch of the 9th and 10th centuries A.D. in India which witnessed gross degeneracy in all spheres of life, afforded temptation for the artists to give free vent to their imagination and the consequence was that there appeared the obscene products of art in the Orissan temples. In due course this caught the fancy of the artists in other parts of India and numberless temples all over the country present this *motif* in the sculptures, paintings and wood carvings in the temples and the cars attached to the temples. Frequently, too, artists in other parts of India have surpassed even the Orissan sculptors in allowing their perverted imagination to run riot, and consequently certain abominable specimens have found their way into the sacred places of worship.

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## N O T E S

1. *Rūpam*, 1925, p. 55. Some early Avanti coins which appear to present the *mithuna* motif are assignable to the 3rd or 2nd century B.C. (*Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Session 4, (1940). pp. 57-8).
2. Marshall and Foucher: *The Monument of Sāñchi*, Plate LXXVII, 20 (a).
3. *Rūpam*, 1925, p. 60.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 61. It has been suggested that the passage in the *Agni Purāṇa* codifies the earlier practice. If that were the case, we are not nearer the solution, for the question still remains as to how the earlier practice originated.
5. *Rūpam*, 1926. pp. 22-4.
6. The mere reference to couple (*dampatti*) in the Rig Vēda, can be hardly taken to throw light on the *mithuna* concept.
7. Bhāṭṭāchārya states that it is found in the 30th Paṭala in the *Suprabhēdāgama*. But Stella Kramrisch (*The Hindu Temple*, Vol. II, p. 347, n. 158) says that this is not found in the Tanjore Manuscript of the *Suprabhēdāgama*.
8. Stella Kramrisch: *The Hindu Temple*, Vol. II, p. 346.
9. Svētāśvara Upaniṣad, IV, 10.
10. Chaṇḍogya Upaniṣad, IV, 13.
11. V. A. Smith: *History of Indian Art*, (1930), p. 124.
12. *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. IX. p. 815.
13. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 871.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 869.

15. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. VIII, (1912), pp. 283-86.
  16. 'Tāntrikism' came to be developed by Mahāyāna in order to convert the primitive Mongolians in Tibet, Central Asia and China, where pure ethics and subtle philosophy were of no use. So the Buddhist preachers in these new lands adopted the prevailing animism or spirit worship and merely superimposed the Buddhist pantheon on it. This Tāntric worship gradually developed an iconography of its own in Tibet and East Bengal.
  17. In the sacred book of the Buddhist Tāntrics which deals with their "Guhyā Samāja," the secret congregation, the Buddha is represented in acts of continuous debauchery with angels. The 'Sādhanās' advocated by Mahāyāna for the attainment of salvation, were nothing but sexual practices in different forms. Proceedings of Indian History Congress, Ninth Session, (1926), pp. 172-3.
  18. Proceedings of the Indian, History Congress, Eighth Session, (1945), pp. 94-7. Zimmer : *The Art of Indian Asia*, Vol. I, pp. 129-30.
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## XIX. Sundaranār, the Historian

Professor Sundaram Pillay is famous in the Tamil world as the author of the celebrated *Manōnmaṇiyam*. Besides, he translated some of the Ten Idylls of classical Tamil literature. Another Tamil publication of his was ‘*Nūrtokai Vilakkam*,’ which tries to classify science from the eastern point of view. Formally he was Professor of Philosophy, but he was fervently devoted to Tamil as well. He stressed the antiquity and greatness of that language and pointed out how Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam and Tulu sprang from its womb. His view was that before the Āryans came to India, Tamil was the prevalent language throughout the sub-continent. He contended that the scientific historian of India ought to begin his study with the basin of the Krishna, of the Kaveri, and of the Vaigai, rather than with the Gangetic plain, as has been now long, too long the fashion.<sup>1</sup>

Again, he was not merely sentimental when he urged that Nāñchināḍ, consisting of the Tamils, must be released from the domination of Malayalam. This was actually accomplished only on the recommendation of the States Reorganisation Commission in 1956.

Prof. Sundaram’s love of Tamil prompted him to take to an enthusiastic study of History and Epigraphy. In fact this devotion emerged from his love of Tamil. A Tamilian born at Alleppey in Travancore, he was prompted to devote his attention to the study of the history of Travancore. The result was the publication of his “Early Sovereigns of Travancore” which was published first in 1894. Later, he contributed two papers ‘Some Sovereigns of Travancore in

the sixth century M. E.,<sup>2</sup> and "Miscellaneous Travancore Inscriptions," contributed to the Indian Antiquary in 1896 and 1897.

The history of Travancore had not received proper attention earlier. Shankunni Menon's History of Travancore was not a reliable historical work, as it consisted of many legends and incredible accounts. Sundaram Pillay applied himself assiduously to the study of Epigraphy and History. Sundaram Pillay was a pioneer in the field of Epigraphy in the extreme south. In fact he was the founder of the Department of Archaeology of Travancore. He gathered by personal research about fifty inscriptions.<sup>3</sup> He deciphered them and expounded their meaning and significance. Sundaram Pillay's profound knowledge of Tamil as well as his familiarity with both Malayalam and the Malayalam-Tamil dialect enabled him to read the inscriptions of Travancore with ease.

Among the inscriptions assessed by him the foremost was the *Maṇalikara inscription* of M. E. 410, which urged the equitable adjustment of the burden of a land tax possessing the two qualities of fixity and certainty to the benefit of Government and subjects. He realized the constitutional importance of the Maṇalikara edict.

The *Gōsala inscription* of 550 M. E. received a great attention at the hands of Prof. Sundaram Pillay. That record which mentions the gift of a silver drum to Tiruvambādi within the Padmanābhasvāmi temple at Trivandrum had been assigned by Prof. Sundaram Pillay to 365 M. E. But on astronomical grounds T. K. Velu Pillay, the author of the revised Travancore State Manual, assigns it to 550 M. E. It seems the latter view is acceptable.

The *Vellayani inscription* of 371 M. E. is another notable record studied by Prof. Sundaram Pillay. This inscription is interesting in so far as it reveals the social and political organisation at the time. He shows how the inscription indicates that there was an important public body in Vēṇāḍ under the name of the 'Six Hundred' to supervise the working of temples and charities. He states that such a large number of people could not have undertaken merely the supervision of temples. He concludes that it was a political body consisting of eighteen Valañjiyars of local magnates who may be described as feudal barons. Therefore, it was an important assembly, though it could not be described as a representative body. Perhaps it refers to the Nayars who were organized originally into guilds of Six Hundred, Five Hundred and Five Thousand as stated by K. P. P. Menon in his 'History of Kēraḷa.'<sup>4</sup>

Sundaram Pillay's view regarding the extent of Vēṇāḍ in the early centuries of the Malabar Era is questioned by T. K. Velu Pillay on the basis of the reference of Barbosa and the Chinese emperor of the 13th century according to which Vēṇāḍ extended north including Kollam. But, T. K. Velu Pillay fails to take note of the dates of Barbosa and of the Chinese emperor concerned in this context. Prof. Sundaram Pillay's contention is more acceptable than that of T. K. Velu Pillay.

*Kollam Era*: Prof. Sundaram Pillay's views on the Kollam Era deserve to be noticed because many noted historians of Kēraḷa, including K. P. P. Menon, Ilamkulam and Sreedhara Menon have accepted it. Sundaram Pillay thought that the Kollam Era was nothing but an adaptation of an older era called Saptarshi or Śāstrasaṁvatsara which was in usage in North India.

Ingenious as the explanation is, it seems far-fetched. True, there is nothing improbable in the adoption of a northern era, especially because the Nambūdiris who later became the dominant people in Kēraḷa, had immigrated there from the north. But the difficulty is the failure to explain why the era was called after Kollam.

Every thing considered, it appears to the present writer that the correct view regarding the genesis of the Kollam Era is that which directly explains ‘Kollam Tōnri.’ This suggestion has been reinforced by the fact that about two centuries subsequent to the rise of the Kollam Era there appeared the ‘Kollam Alinda’ era commencing from the date of the destruction of Kollam. With the rise of the Kollam town (i.e. in A.D. 824-5) the new era would have been established.

A pioneer in the field, he did make some unavoidable mistakes. But, considering the substantial work turned out by him in the fields of Epigraphy and History, Sundaram Pillay deserves a high place in South Indian History no less than in Tamil.

Though it is human to err, Sundaram Pillay exerted his utmost to make a critical use of the materials then available. As Dr. R. Harvey put it, Prof. Sundaram Pillay stated, “the author (Sundaram Pillay) for the purposes of history weighs evidence in the most severely critical manner, acknowledging ignorance wherever he could not gather sufficient data to enable him to form it, and exercising his imagination only within strictly scientific limits and then with good effect.”<sup>5</sup>

In fact, Sundaram Pillay himself had stated that “in scientific researches nothing can be more dangerous than taking

things on trust." He added the warning that the etymology of geographical names is not always a reliable guide to history."<sup>6</sup>

*Date of Tirujñānasambandar*: Among the historical findings of Prof. Sundaram Pillay based on a study of South Indian history and literature was the date of Tirujñāna-sambandar. In his valuable paper entitled "Some milestones in the history of Tamil literature" he held that the age of Tirujñānasambandar was about the first half of the 7th century A.D. Earlier authorities had advanced very widely varying dates. For instance, Caldwell placed Sambandar in the 13th century A.D. and Nelson in the 14th century A.D. These views betray such an absence of the sense of historical perspective as cannot but produce the most amusing and grotesque results, for they seem to assign Sambandar to a post-Periyapurāṇam date !

Very recently an examination of Sundaram Pillay's view has been registered by Dr. B. G. L. Swamy.<sup>7</sup> He says that on the basis of certain episodes narrated by Śēkkilār in his Periyapurāṇam, Tirunāvukkaraśu is incorrectly deemed to be a senior contemporary of Tirujñānasambandar and that both lived during the reign of Mahēndravarman I (c. 610-30). But he has not proved the untenability of the contemporaneity of these three.

Secondly, while the Periyapurāṇam states that Śiruttonḍar was visited by Śiva in the guise of Bhairava, in the Kannada versions it is stated that Śiva came as Himself! What does this disparity in the legends prove? No historian considers these Purāṇas as accurate history. They contain some beliefs which got embodied in the Periyapurāṇam.

Thirdly Sundaram Pillay takes the conversion of one Kūn Pāṇḍya from Jainism to Śaivism as “the most important historical fact connected with Sambandar’s life.” Does Dr. Swamy doubt the historicity of Kūn Pāṇḍya or his date? His attention may be drawn to the name Kūṇa which is borne on a copper coin<sup>8</sup> discovered by Sir Walter Elliot.

Regarding Kūn Pāṇḍyan, Dr. Swamy says that a king would not be referred to by a sacrilegious epithet ‘kūṇ’ (hunchback). This is not convincing. They were not the days of flatterers or hypocrites. It must be known that this king’s name was Niṅgaśīr Neḍumāran.

Fourthly Mahēndravarman’s construction of “temples to Brahmā, Viṣṇu and still later to Śiva alone does not disprove the possibility of his having been a Jain earlier. The zeal of a new convert is proverbial. Appar’s not having visited temples built by Mahēndravarman is a piece of negative argument. These principal arguments show the untenability of Dr. Swamy’s views elaborated in an unjustifiably long essay. However, one or two points raised by him may be reconsidered by himself. What was Śēkkilār’s motive in inventing the contemporaneity of Tirujñānasambandar and Tirunāvukkaraśu in the time of Mahēndravarman I? It should be noted that Dr. Swamy (p. 145) himself admits the date of Mahēndravarman I.

Fifthly he tries to make capital out of the fact that Sundaram Pillay takes the date of Ādi Śaṅkarāchārya as the 7th century. Even if this date is taken to be 8th or 9th century, does it vitally affect the question at issue? The fact is that the *Soundarya Lahari* speaks of ‘Drāvida Śiśu’ referring to Sambandar who was earlier in date. When he finds this fact inconvenient he tries to whip up the theory that *Soundarya Lahari* was not a work of Ādi Śaṅkara.

Sixthly every one admits that Śēkkilār's object was religious; it was to inculcate bhakti; but would he have invented the past history as a figment of his imagination?

Seventhly, B. G. L. Swamy contradicts himself at places (p. 126). He says: The king, who is said to have returned from the path of 'hostile conduct' to Śaivism, would not have dedicated his early excavations to Trīmūrti or subsequently to Viṣṇu, as he did at Mahēndravāḍi." In the succeeding sentence Swamy approves the view of Srinivasan that "he was a tolerant follower of Vaidikamārga (Brāhmaṇical religion) and under the influence of the contemporary events and in the trend of the prevailing religious revival he became an ardent Śaiva in the latter part of his life, when all his three cave-temples Tiruchirāppalli, Dalavanūr and Śiyamaṅgalam were dedicated to Śiva in preference to other Gods."

Eighthly, many of the temples built by Mahēndravarman I are scattered in the area where Tirunāvukkaraśar is said to have roamed about (p. 127). Why does the saint fail to mention that? This is a purely negative argument. In those days there was no official Archaeological Dept. or Dept. of Religious Endowment to record these.

Finally, Swamy exploits the fact that "there are many literary works in the Kannada language dealing with the lives of the sixty three Śaiva saints. (P. 121 ff.) It is gratifying to note that the earliest of these was written by Harihara who lived about the 12th century A.D., thus more or less a contemporary of Śēkkilār. The probability is that Śēkkilār's account might have formed the basis for Harihara's and other writers' accounts. The omissions and differences among these

accounts do not prove the total undependability of the Periya-purāṇam. In those days of communication of ideas from one place to other distant places several discrepancies might have appeared.<sup>9</sup>

One word more regarding the possible dates of the Nāyanmārs. They must have lived at least two centuries before their hymns were sung in temples as Tiruppadigams. In this connection, attention should be drawn to the inscription<sup>10</sup> of Nandivarman III (A.D. 846-69) in the Bilvanātheśvara temple at Tiruvallam which records that provision was made for those who were to sing the Tiruppadigam i.e. the Dēvāram. Even before the time of Rāja Rāja I the recitation of the Dēvāram hymns in temples had been regularly organized. It is found that inscriptions of the region of Parāntaka I are found at Lālgudi and Allūr which refer to arrangements made for singing the Tiruppadigam daily in the temples.<sup>11</sup> From the reign of Parāntaka I (A.D. 907-955) we hear of endowments made for the recitation of the hymns in the temples. The fact that there was an officer known as Dēvāranāyakam, or superintendent of Dēvāram in the reign of Rājendra I show that there was a regular State department organizing and controlling the work. These prove that the Dēvāram must have arisen several centuries before the time of Parāntaka I. For the hymns to become popular a period of about two centuries must have taken place. This confirms Sundaram Pillay's date of Tirujñāna Sambandar,

## NOTES

1. *Tamilian Antiquary* (No. 2, 1908), p. 4.
2. M.E. denotes Malabar Era, equivalent to Kollam Era which commenced in 824-5 A.D.
3. K. V. Rangaswami Aiyangar's Foreword to Sundaram Pillay's *Early Sovereigns of Travancore*.
4. K. P. P. Menon, *History of Kerala*, Vol. I, p. 251.
5. Harvey, *Early Sovereigns of Travancore*, p. XV.
6. *Ibid.*, p. XVI.
7. *Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures*, 1975 January—June, pp. 119 ff.
8. Sir Walter Elliot, *Coins of South India*, p. 121.
9. The present writer does not believe in the historicity of all the stories described in Periyapurāṇam. But he thinks that Śekkīlār would have woven out of his imagination around facts which were then believed by people.
10. *S. I. I.* Vol. III, Part I, p. 93.  
Some have cast a doubt whether Tiruppadigam included the Dēvāram. But this is baseless because the two terms are found used interchangeably. Tiruppadigam specified devotional songs as a whole.
11. 373 of 1903 and 99 of 1929.

## XX. Date of Māṇikkavāchagar

One of the disputed questions of South Indian history is the date of Māṇikkavāchagar. For a long time the question centred around the controversy whether Māṇikkavāchagar preceded or succeeded the Dēvāram Trio. Several scholars held that Māṇikkavāchagar lived long before the Dēvāram hymnists, probably as early as the Śaṅgam age itself. An equation of greatness with antiquity was largely responsible for the ingenious attempt to push back the date of Māṇikkavāchagar. It was sought to be shown that certain references of Tirunāvukkaraśar pertain to none other than to Māṇikkavāchagar. But some recent writers have refuted this deduction.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, it has been indicated that in his songs Māṇikkavāchagar has referred to Tirujñānasambandar,<sup>2</sup> Tirunāvukkaraśar<sup>3</sup> and Sundaramūrti<sup>4</sup>, not by name but by references to their distinctive role as Śaiva devotees. These citations seem to show that Māṇikkavāchagar lived subsequent to the Dēvāram saints.

But even more convincing is the circumstance that Sundarar does not include Māṇikkavāchagar in his Tiruttonḍattogai. Sundarar had set about the task of recording systematically the names and achievements of Śaiva devotees, and it is inexplicable how he could have ignored Māṇikkavāchagar if he had lived before the time of Sundarar<sup>5</sup>. And since Sundarar had not mentioned Māṇikkavāchagar, Śēkkilār who faithfully followed the Tiruttonḍattogai, also omitted the reference to this saint in his Periyapurāṇam.

The language used by Māṇikkavāchagar is not very different from that of the Dēvāram hymnists. Even he who runs will find it to be very different from the archaic pattern of the Śaṅgam classics. Moreover, the philosophical views contained in the Tiruvāchagam show a development of those found in Dēvāram<sup>6</sup>.

A specific piece of evidence which shows that Tirunāvukkaraśar and presumably therefore Tirujñānasambandar had preceded Māṇikkavāchagar is found in his ‘Pōṛittiru ahaval’ in which he adores the Śiva enshrined at Śirāppaḷli. The Śiva temple at Śirāppaḷli, it is learnt from inscriptions, was originally a Jaina *vihāra*. Māṇikkavāchagar has sung in praise of the Śiva<sup>7</sup> who was installed by Mahēndravarman I in the spot where the Jain *vihāra* had flourished earlier. Therefore, he must have been posterior to Mahēndravarman I (c. A.D. 600-630) and Tirunāvukkaraśar.

Above all, the reference in the present tense to a Pāṇḍyan monarch Varaguṇa in two of his songs,<sup>8</sup> embodied in his Tirukkōvai, suggests that Māṇikkavāchagar was a contemporary of a Varaguṇa the Pāṇḍyan king. To the best of our knowledge there was no Varaguṇa in legend or history anterior to the kings of that name who ruled the First Pāṇḍyan Empire.

After the discovery of the larger Sinnamanūr plates it is known that in the line of rulers of the First Pāṇḍyan Empire there were two Varagunas, the one a grandson of the other. The grandfather has been described as Varaguṇa Mahārāja in the Sinnamanūr plates, as Jaṭila Parāntaka Neḍuñjadaiyan in the Vēlviikkudi grant and as Jaṭilavarman in the Madras Museum plates. He has been assigned slightly different dates by different scholars but there is little doubt that he was ruling in A.D. 770, the date of the Anamalai inscription

(year 3871 of the Kaliyuga era). From other epigraphic evidence his reign may be taken to have lasted for fifty years—approximately from A.D. 765 to 815.<sup>9</sup>

The other was his grandson known as Varagunavarman (II), who ruled between A.D. 862 and 880. Of these two Varagunas, who could have been the contemporary and patron of Māṇikkavāchagar? There is no clear indication on this question in the available sources.<sup>10</sup>

In this connection a clue comes from a Sinhalese source. Nikaya Saṅgrahava, a Sinhalese chronicle, records that Sēna I, the king of Śrī Laṅka, was converted to the Śaiva faith and that his daughter was cured of her dumbness by 'an ascetic clad in the robes of a priest.'<sup>11</sup> It is probable that the ascetic mentioned in this connection was Māṇikkavāchagar, because we have some corroboration of this from the Tamil source.

In the legends connected with the career of Māṇikkavāchagar, described in the Tiruvātavūrār Purāṇam, it is stated that he converted a Buddhist king of Śrī Laṅka to Śaivism and that he cured the king's daughter of dumbness.<sup>12</sup> The story runs that the Sinhalese king had gone with his dumb daughter to Chidambaram to witness the religious controversy between the Buddhist priests of Śrī Laṅka and Māṇikkavāchagar, and that when the saint performed the miracle of making the dumb princess gain her power of speech, the king and his followers including the Buddhist priests, all embraced Hinduism. One may or may not believe the supernatural element involved in the story. But the coincidence of the story itself in the Tamil Tiruvātavūrār Purāṇam and the Sinhalese Nikaya Saṅgrahava is striking. It is quite likely

that a religious controversy had been held between Māṇikka-vāchagar and certain Buddhist priests at Chidambaram in the time of Sēna I.

Now the determination of the date of Sēna I is not very easy. The traditional date assigned for the reign of Sēna I on the basis of the Chūlāvamśa account is A.D. 846 to 866. But in the light of the Pāṇḍyan epigraphs of the period a correction of 24 years has to be effected in the Chūlāvamśa chronology. This correction will give the approximate dates A.D. 822 to 842.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, Māṇikkavāchagar may be assigned to the first half of the 9th century A.D. And he must be considered to have been a contemporary of Varaguṇa I, whose reign ended in A.D. 815, rather than of Varaguṇa II, whose reign commenced only in A.D. 862.

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## N O T E S

1. See, for example, Sadasiwa Pandarattar: “*Kalagattin Āiratteṭṭāvatu Veli-īṭṭu Malar*” p. 72.
  2. Tiruvāchagam—Tiruvammānai 8.
  3. —do— —Tiruchadagam 89.
  4. —do— —Eṇappadigam 6.
  5. The contention that the term ‘Poyyaṭimai-illāda-pulavar’ employed by Sundarar refers to none other than Māṇikkavāchagar is too vague and unconvincing.
  6. The Tamil Plutarch (1946) Note by T. P. Meenakshisundaranar on p. 63.
  7. Pōggit-tiru-ahaval—line 154 ‘Sīrappaṭṭi mēviya Śivanē pōggī.
  8. Tirukkōvai songs Nos. 306 and 327.
  9. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri—The Pāṇḍyan Kingdom, p. 60.
  10. Pandarattar’s view favouring Varaguṇa I on the ground that the Pāṇḍyas had lost control over the Chōlas by the time of Varaguṇa II (op. cit p. 75) is not convincing.
  11. Nikaya Sangrahava p. 18; see also C. S. Navaratnam: Tamils and Ceylon, p. 95 and C. Rasanayagam: Ancient Jaffna, pp. 253-4.
  12. G. U. Pope: The Tiruvāchagam—The Legendary History of Māṇikkavāchagar pp. xxx-xxxii (Tiruvātavūrār-Purāṇam, Canto VI.)
  13. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri—The Pāṇḍyan Kingdom, pp. 70-71.
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## XXII The History of Nāñchinād

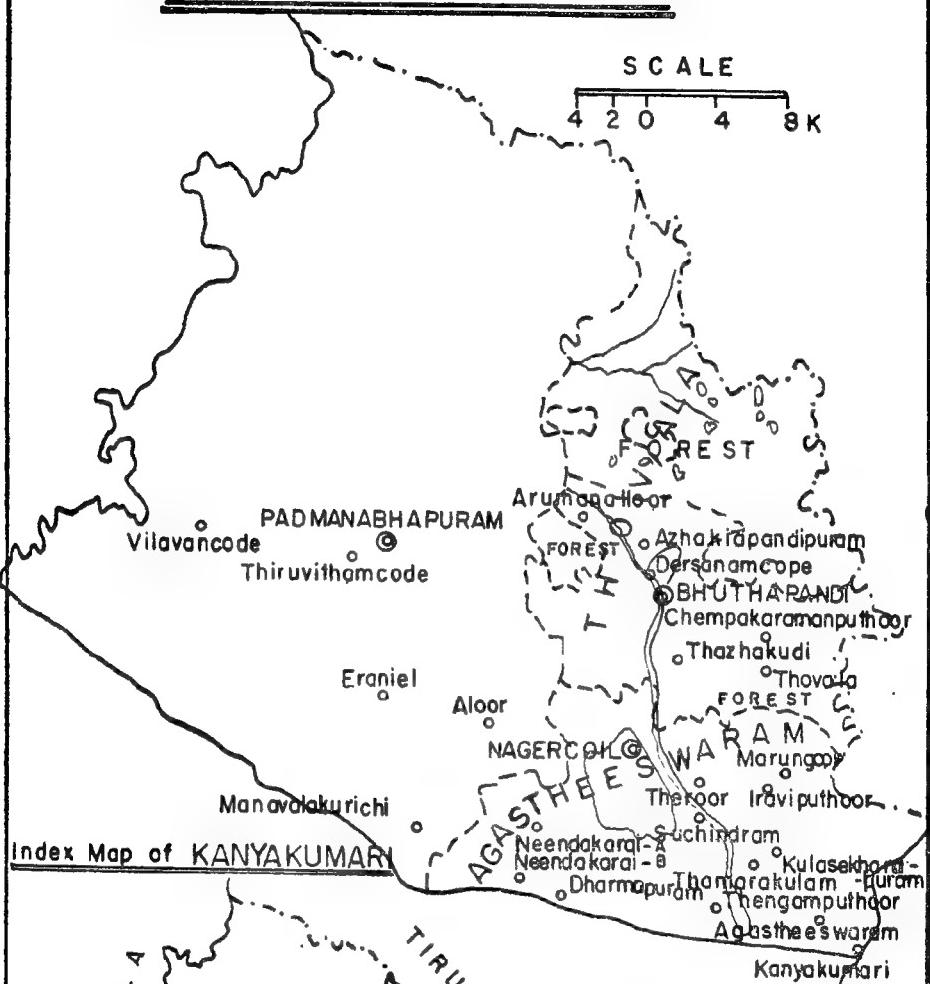
To the best of my knowledge, the history of Nāñchinād has not been yet reconstructed in a systematic manner on the basis of the entire available data. Till now, it has received little more than a left-handed treatment at the hands of writers of Travancore History. The reason for this circumstance was that early historians of Travancore viewed Nāñchinād as having been an integral part of that country even in the distant past. Writers like Pachu Muthatu, Shankunny Menon, Nagamiah and recently Mr. T. K. Velu Pillai, have not, in my opinion, accorded the due place for Nāñchinād in early history. That Nāñchinād has all the time constituted a distinctly separate unit, socially and culturally different from the rest of Travancore, has been woefully ignored by them. A systematic utilisation and a proper interpretation of the Tamil sources, literary and epigraphic, is essential in a scheme of true reconstruction of South Indian History. Nāñchinād has played an important role in the history of South India, for, almost all the leading dynasties of South India have been associated with Nāñchinād at one stage or another. As early as the period of the Śāngam Age and for several centuries succeeding it, Nāñchinād formed the cockpit of South India. Exposed to successive conquerors, Nāñchinād fell by turns under the influence of the Āys, the Pāṇḍyas and Chōlas, the Chēras and Vēṇād sovereigns and later under the Vijayanagar generals and Nāyak chieftains of Madura. Nāñchinād can be rightly described as the 'cockpit of the South.'

Some scholars of Tamil Nādu, no doubt, have thrown light on certain epochs of Nāñchinād's early history, as, for example, that of the early Āys by Professor V. R. R. Dikshitar

# NANCHINAD

SCALE

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Index Map of KANYAKUMARI

KERALA



and Rao Sahib Sri M. Raghava Aiyangar and that of the Pāṇḍyas by Professor K. A. Nilakanta Sastri. But more remains to be done before a connected narrative of Nāñchinād's history can be attempted.

### *Extent of Nāñchinād*

To-day the name Nāñchinād denotes the region comprising Tōvālai and Agastiśvaram, the two southern most Taluks of Travancore. But, from early times down to the 18th century A.D., Nāñchinād comprised a slightly lesser region. It covered the tract bounded on the north by the Kaḍukkarai hills, on the south by the Maṇarkudy Lake, on the east by the Āruvāymoli Pass and on the west by the Panrivāykkāl. That this formed the original extent of Nāñchinād is learned from the 'Mudaliyār Manuscripts,' as well as from early inscriptions. The disparity in extent between Nāñchinād of old and of the present day was not, however, very considerable, for, only the tract between Maṇarkudi and Kanyākumari, which lay in Puṛattāyanādu was then outside the limit of Nāñchinād. To the west of it stretched Kuṛunādu; indeed, it was only on the western side that the boundary occasionally varied in accordance with the changing fortunes of the ruling dynasties. At times it included parts of the present Kalkulam and Vilavankōdu taluks stretching up to Āykuḍi near Shenkōṭṭai.

The etymology of the name Nāñchinād need not detain us long. The traditional view that it was called after a local ruler Nāñchikkuravan, who is supposed to have flourished in the 12th century A.D. is clearly unhistoric because, centuries earlier, a certain chieftain ruling in the region was described as Nāñchil Valluvan or Porunan in the Tamil Classics. In fact, both Nāñchikkuravan and Nāñchil Valluvan owed their names to the country and not the country to

them. Moreover, as will be shown later, Nāñchikkuravan appears to have been only an eponymous character like Romulus of Rome.

Another common view is that the land owed its designation to the rampart of mountain barriers which constitute the boundaries of Nāñchinād on the north and east. The word Nāñchil means bastion or fort, and in support of this connotation a writer quotes Kambar's usage of the term in a similar context.<sup>1</sup> But the obvious weakness of this explanation is that Nāñchinād is not surrounded by hills on all sides; on the south and south-west there lies the ocean, while on the west there stretches a vast belt of territory.

The more plausible and direct derivation seems traceable to the natural productivity of the land. Thus 'நன் செய் நாடு' signifies the fertile land of paddy fields. It may be noticed that 'நாஞ்சில்' also denotes ploughshare<sup>2</sup> in which sense too, the flourishing condition of agriculture is implied. That Nāñchinād has all along maintained a fame for its abundance of natural resources is well known. Reference to its extraordinary fertility is found even in the Śāngam works. In stanzas 137 and 139 of the Puranānūru Anthology, Orucirai Periyānār and Marudan Ilānāganār speak of the uncommon richness of the soil, the consequent superfluity of tilling it and the large volume of water that is discharged into the sea carrying in its train flowers of variegated colours.

Concerning the physical origin of the entire belt of territory on the West Coast extending from Gōkarṇam to Kanyākumari there is the popular Paraśurāma legend. The two indigenous literary compositions of Malabar, the "Keralōlpatti" in Malayalam and the "Kēraṭamāhātmyam" in Sanskrit, both accept the traditional account and ascribe

the origin of Kēraḷa to Paraśurāma, the warrior sage. Thus, Nāñchināḍ, like the rest of the territory between the Western Ghats and the Arabian sea, stretching from Gōkarṇam in the north to Cape Comorin, the southernmost tip, is said to have emerged from the ocean at the command of Paraśurāma. But neither “*Kēraḷōlpatti*” nor “*Kēraḷamāhātmyam*” was compiled earlier than the 17th century, and judged by the canons of historical authenticity, their reliability is anything but sound. Undoubtedly Nagam Aiya overestimated the historical value of Kēraḷōlpatti when he wrote that “since the tradition recorded in it is found interwoven with the details of the daily life of the people, it attains the rank of authentic history.”<sup>3</sup> Logan, though rather severe and unsympathetic, is not far incorrect in his verdict that the “*Kēraḷōlpatti*” is a farrago of legendary nonsense.” In fact, it is full of anachronisms and contradictions, interspersed with incredible fables. The “*Kēraḷamāhātmyam*” does not stand on a better footing. Besides being subject to the defects found in the Malayalam work, this one is, in addition, vitiated by the dominant desire to prove the thesis of the specially sacred character of the brāhmaṇins of Kēraḷa. Thus it is fruitless to glean history from either of them, except where their accounts are corroborated by other reliable sources.

A later interpretation brought to bear upon the Paraśurāma legend holds that it is an allegoric representation of the advent of the Āryans into Kēraḷa similar to the view maintained regarding the legendary association of Agastya with the Tamil Nādu. Plausible as it seems, this interpretation is perhaps true. However, the story that Kēraḷa was redeemed from the sea through supernatural agency, remains still in the land of myths.

### *The Āys*

Speculations apart, the safest starting point for the history of Nāñchināḍ is to be sought in the accounts of foreign observers. The earliest foreign notice of the region comprised in later Travancore is found in the Periplus of the Erythrean Sea, compiled, sometime between 81 and 96 A.D. Mention is made therein of Komari as a harbour and also of the significant fact that the land to the south of Nelcyṇḍa up to Komari formed part of the Pāṇḍyan Kingdom.<sup>4</sup>

The next European writer who speaks about this region is Ptolemy, who compiled his 'Geography' about 140 A.D. He states, however, that to the south of the Chēra Kingdom there flourished the territory of the Āys, extending from Melkyṇḍa, obviously identical with Nelcyṇḍa<sup>5</sup> of the Periplus, to Komari, and that it was only past Komaria that the Pāṇḍyan Kingdom lay.<sup>6</sup> This suggests that the Āys had deprived the Pāṇḍyas of the land stretching from Nelcyṇḍa to Komari sometime between 96 and 140 A.D. Who the Āys were, what their political status was, whether they were independent of the Chēras and Pāṇḍyas are questions which Ptolemy does not touch upon.

We turn to that fertile but rather elusive source—the Śaṅgam works—for fresh light; though it is essential to remember that the poems and anthologies have to be used with caution. 'Purānānūṛu' extols one Āy-Āṇdiran, a philanthropic king who ruled over the region near the Podiyilmalai. He is described as Vēl Āy and Mā-Vēl-Āy in Purānānūṛu. (Stanzas 127-38). He patronised the Tamil poets most liberally and three poets, Muḍamōśiyar of Ēniccēri (in Purānānūṛu S. 374), Kuṭṭuvan Kīranār (in Purānānūṛu

S. 240) and Īḍaikilār of Turaiyūr (in Puṣanānūru S. 136) have sung in praise of him. Another poet Kārikkanṇanār also refers to him in Narrinai S. 237.

It is further learnt that the principal town, presumably the capital of this Āy ruler was Āykuḍy, which was very likely identical with the hamlet of the same name near Shencōṭṭai, as suggested by the late Dr. Swaminatha Aiyar. But Gopinatha Rao's argument, that since relics of neither monuments, fortifications nor inscriptions are seen in that place now, it could not have been the capital 2000 years ago, is not convincing. The present condition of Puhār, the famous capital of the Chōḷas and Vañchi the ancient capital of the Chēras shows the weakness of Mr. Rao's argument.<sup>7</sup>

Since the Āys seem to have emerged into prominence between Nelcyṇḍa and Komari sometime between 96 A.D. and 140 A.D., probably it was Āy Aṇḍiran, about whose prowess the 'Puṣanānūru' presents a glowing picture, who drove away the Pāṇḍyas from that region. But it has to be admitted that the poems which eulogise his valour and generosity do not advert to any triumph over the Pāṇḍyas. Though the argument of silence cannot be pressed too far in this matter, the wide difference between the purpose of the period and that of the modern historian should not be overlooked as an explanation for the omission of reference to a specific victory. However, to exploit the omission in order to build up a theory that, by Ptolemy's time the Āys had already lost their supremacy at the hands of the Pāṇḍyas, as Mr. K. N. Sivaraja Pillay has attempted to do, is to strain the reasoning too much.

An effort at fixing the chronological background of the personalities of the period seems to lend support to the hypothesis of Aṇḍiran's military triumph over the Pāṇḍyas.

The brāhmaṇ poet, Mudamōsiyar, the author of the laudatory verses on Āy Aṇḍiran in ‘Puṛanānūrū’ has also sung in praise of Antuvan Chēral Irumporai and the Chōlan Perunaṛkilli. Presumably these three rulers were contemporaries, though this suggestion depends on the authenticity of the colophons appended to the lyrics of the Puṛanānūrū. Indeed it is difficult to be too sure as to when and by whom these colophons were appended to the poems. However, on the assumption of the contemporaneity of the heroes on whom the respective poets have sung, the three above-mentioned rulers may be considered as contemporaries of Āy Aṇḍiran. And according to the computation reckoned on the basis of the Śenguttuvan Gajabahu synchronism, Antuvan Chēral is shown by Mr. K. G. Sesha Aiyar to have ruled about the period ranging from 100 to 190 A.D. This seems to confirm that Aṇḍiran’s reign could be assigned to the 2nd century A.D.

Here it is pertinent to observe that both Pliny and Ptolemy speak of a flourishing commercial mart Kōṭṭiara situated in the land of Āys. There is little difficulty in identifying this town—‘the Kōṭṭiara’ of Pliny and ‘the Kōṭṭiara Metropolis’ of Ptolemy with the modern town of Kōṭṭar included in the Nagercoil Municipality. The reference to Kōṭṭar as a leading commercial place in the land of the Āys further confirms the fact of Āy rule over Nāñchināḍ in the 2nd century A.D.

There is no means of ascertaining the identity of the immediate successor of Āy Aṇḍiran at Āykudi. All that we learn from the Śaṅgam literature is that one Titiyan has been described as ‘Potiyir Chelvan’ by the poet king Bhūtappāṇḍyan. Whether Bhūtappāṇḍyan waged war with Titiyan is not mentioned anywhere. But the Pāṇḍyan king must have come at least as far as Bhūtappāṇḍy, a place named

after him, and where a temple called Bhūtappāṇḍīśvaramudaiyār was founded. Bhūtappāṇḍy is a town in Nāñchinād, about 5 miles north of Kōṭṭar. The circumstances that Bhūtappāṇḍiyan speaks of Titiyan in complimentary terms and that a temple commemorating his advent has appeared, may suggest that the Pāṇḍya sovereign and Titiyan came to an agreement fixing Bhūtappāṇḍy as the western limit of the Pāṇḍyan power, leaving the region to the north and west of it in the hands of Titiyan. In this connection it is worthy of note that Kēraḷōlpatti in an euphemistic manner states that one Bhūtarāya Pāṇḍy Perumāl was chosen king by the Brāhmins of Kēraḷa. Certainly this and similar references of the Kēraḷōlpatti to the choice of kings from outside are veiled facts of conquest by foreign monarchs. The Kēraḷōlpatti states that after a period of indigenous kings, who were generally incompetent, the brāhmins selected kings from the neighbouring countries and brought them to Kēraḷa on the understanding that each was to rule for 12 years, and it adds that these foreign rulers who were brought into the country were known as Perumāls. Evidently this account of the Kēraḷōlpatti is based on popular traditions about the invasions of neighbouring kings.

This Titiyan could not have been the ruler of the same name figuring in the Ahanānūru as one of the chieftains who formed a confederacy against Nedūñcheliyan. For one thing a considerably wide interval seems to have intervened between Bhūtappāṇḍiyan and Talayālaikānattu cheruvēṅga Nedūñcheliyan. Perhaps this Titiyan also was a member of the Āy dynasty and a successor of the so-called Potiyir Chelvan. But it must be admitted that none of the Śaṅgam works refers to him as having been connected with Āys or the Potiyil Hills. In the existing state of our knowledge, to speak of this chieftain as Titiyan the second Āy, as Mr. K. N. Sivaraja Pillay has done, seems unwarranted<sup>6</sup>.

It is indeed difficult to follow the facile though ingenious reconstruction of successive generations of Āy rulers attempted by Mr. K. N. Sivaraja Pillay. He holds that Titiyan, the Potiyir Chelvan, was followed by one Adigan, who in his turn, was succeeded by another Titiyan who was vanquished at Talayālaṅkānam. The difficulties in accepting this bridging of the gulfs in our knowledge have been shown by Professor Dikshitar in a paper read at the Oriental Conference held at Trivandrum. Apart from the doubt pertaining to the dynasty to which the later Titiyan belonged, there exists the problem of identifying Adigan.

That Alagiyapāṇḍipuram, a flourishing village in Nāñchi-nād, was once called Adiganūr is learnt not only from the “Mudaliyār Manuscripts” but also from an inscription of 1077 A.D. found in Mēlkarai:—It runs: “கொல்லம் தோன்றி யிருநூற்றைம் பத்திரண்டா மாண்டு நாஞ்சி காட்ட தியனூரான அழகியபாண்டிபுரத்து”.

Clearly the older name was Adiganūr and it was transformed later into Alagiyapāṇḍipuram; but it is difficult to hold that it was after Adigan, an Āy ruler, that it was originally called so. Judged from the practice common in the Pāṇḍya and Chōla kingdoms it is when a ruler effects a conquest outside his territories that he is inclined to impose his name on any village of the conquered territory as a commemoration of his victory. If Adigan were a successor of Potiyir Chelvan who was ruling over Nāñchinād, there appears scant probability of his having bestowed his name on a village in his own territory. On the other hand there was a ruler Adigamān Nedumānañchi, who belonged to a branch of the Chēra line. Since he was known variously as Adigamān, Adigan, Adigaimān, and Adiyan, it may be guessed that he was the author of the original name of Alagiyapāṇḍipuram.<sup>9</sup>

In the present state of our knowledge it has to be admitted that there is a blank in the history of the Āys after the period of Potiyir Chelvan. But, since they appear again in the history of the 8th century A.D. it is likely that during the intervening period, the Āys had been reduced to the position of local chieftains, probably by the Chēras in the north. Beginning with the 8th century, Āy rulers had their seat of power near Tiruviḍaikkōdu in Kuṭunādu; therefore, it seems that they had been expelled from the Potiyil Hills to this locality which came to be known as Vēṇād (Āy Vēṇād). During the latter period of the Āy history in the West Coast, their rule extended over Nāñchinād, or at any rate over the major part of it. No other ruler is mentioned in connection with the Pāṇḍya or Chōla battles at Kōṭṭar, the principal town of Nāñchinād.

### *Nāñchil Porunan*

Several centuries prior to the reappearance of Āys into prominence, there emerges the personality of Nāñchil Vaṭṭuvan ruling in the northern part of Nāñchinād. Our knowledge about him is derived exclusively from the Śaṅgam works. Marudan Iḷanāganār, Avvaiyār, Orucirai Periyānār and Karuvūr Kadapillai are the poets who have sung about him. The commentator of “Puṣanānūru” describes Porunan as Nāñchil Vaṭṭuvan. But the Puṣanānūru itself speaks of him as a Maṭava.<sup>10</sup> It is probable that he belonged to the Vaṭṭuva caste, generally identical with the priestly class amongst the paraiyahs and that the designation ‘Maṭava’ signified only a military distinction. Kandan was the personal name of the chieftain; and although ordinarily the term Porunan denoted a king, in this particular case, it appears to have been the family name of the chieftain. This is evident from the fact that when another ruler of the Nāñchil Hills is referred to in the “Ahanānūru” (S. 36) he

is merely mentioned as Porunan without any qualifying term. Nāñchil Valluvan was ruling over the Nāñchil Hills and the adjoining region.

However, it is difficult to agree with the savant Dr. V. Swaminatha Aiyar who held that Nāñchil Valluvan was a vassal and a friend of the Chēra ruler on the flimsy ground that the word ‘Vēndar’ in Stanza 139 denotes the Chēra. The lines run thus :—

“ யீத ஸானுன் வேங்கேத வேந்தற்குச்  
சாத லஞ்சாய் நிதே ”

No doubt, his position was that of a vassal, as is evident from the lines quoted above. But his suzerain must have been the Pāṇḍya and not the Chēra, because the same Tamil Classic speaks of him also as “ Tennavar Vayamaravan.” It may be mentioned here that the legendary ruler Nāñchikkuravan was described as a Pāṇḍya vassal, owing his position and authority to the Pāṇḍya sovereign. Since the story of Nāñchikkuravan has been, in my opinion, modelled on the known facts of Nāñchil Porunan, I am tempted to think that the Porunan’s power was an entire creation of a Pāṇḍya monarch. Is it likely that Nāñchil Porunan was the lineal descendant of a local chieftain set up in Nāñchinād by Bhūtapāṇḍiyan after his successful expedition ? Perhaps it is.

We do not hear of any war waged by Nāñchil Porunan ; nor do we know anything about the Āy ruler contemporaneous with him. If the Āy king continued to exercise sway over Nāñchinād his authority over the northern part of it was probably checked by Nāñchil Porunan. Evidently, the Āy chieftain, reduced to a subordinate position by the Chēra monarch on the one hand and faced by the rise of Porunan on the other, maintained but a feeble power over Kuṛunādu and southern Nāñchinād.

What was the period of Nāñchil Porunan's rule? The only clue regarding this is afforded by the fact that Avvai, the Śaṅgam celebrity who has composed a poem on him has also sung about Chēramān Māvenkō, Ugraperuvaluti Pāṇḍya and Rājasūyam Vēṭṭa Perunarkillī. If the chronological scheme worked out by the late Mr. K. G. Sesha Aiyar on the basis of Śeṅguṭṭuvan Gajabāhu synchronism is dependable, the 3rd century A.D. and more specifically, the latter half of it, may be considered as the period of these sovereigns and of Nāñchil Porunan.

Little is known about the successors of Kandan, the Nāñchil Valluvan. It seems probable that it was a later member of the same line who deified Avvai, the poetess, and erected several shrines in her honour, for it is well known that Avvai was honoured by Kandan himself. In villages in the neighbourhood of Alagiyapāṇḍipuram the worship of Avvai has been remarkably common. In Kurattiyarai, very near Alagiyapāṇḍipuram, there is a rock-cut shrine, where the image worshipped is believed to be that of Avvai. About six miles south of it is the hamlet called 'Avvaiyār-ammankōil' which takes its name after the shrine dedicated to Avvai. Who popularised the worship of Avvai in this region is not now ascertainable; but it is probable that a successor of Kandan, the Nāñchil Porunan, was the ruler responsible for it.

There occurs a reference to another Porunan in the Ahanānūru (Stanza 36). He was one of the minor chiefs who participated in the confederacy organized by these chieftains along with the Chōla and Chēra sovereigns to oppose Nedūñcheliyan at Talayālāṅkānam. In all probability this Porunan was also a chief of the Nāñchil Hills. But it is difficult to ascertain his exact date or the nature of his relationship with Kandan. That the two Porunans of

the Śāngam Age are not identical is evident from the facts that Kandan recognised the Pāṇḍya as his suzerain and that there is no reference whatever of any hostility between them.

Little is known about the later history of Nāñchil Porunan's dynasty. Perhaps it became extinct after the defeat at Talayālaṅkānam; or it was subdued and exterminated by one of the Pāṇḍya monarchs of the First Empire. However, there is little doubt that before the 7th century A.D. northern Nāñchināḍ had passed into the hands of the Imperial Pāṇḍyas. This suggestion is supported by the fact that the Pāṇḍya monarchs of a later date like Raṇadhīra and Jaṭila Parāntaka who waged frequent wars in the land of the the Āys are not known to have fought even a single battle in northern Nāñchināḍ.

### *Early Pāṇḍyas and Nāñchināḍ*

The one power which had the closest association with Nāñchināḍ from early times was that of the Pāṇḍyas. There is unimpeachable evidence to show that the whole of Nāñchināḍ at times, and certain regions of it during other periods, remained under the rule of the Pāṇḍya sovereign.

For instance, Kanyākumari, the southern extremity of Tamilakam, and the sacred village at the land's end of India, formed a part of the Pāṇḍyan Empire from a very early date. Literary and epigraphic testimony supports the traditional association of the Pāṇḍyas with this celebrated place. ‘Divākaram’ describes the Pāṇḍya sovereign as ‘குமரிச்சேர்பன்’ i.e., the lord of Kumari. Puranānūru speaks of the Pāṇḍya as the supreme master of the Pahṛuṇi river which emptied itself into the ocean at Kanyākumari. In this connection it may be observed that a certain misreading of the lines in Śilappadikāram has been responsible for a

considerable misunderstanding. It was held by some scholars in the first place that the Pahṛuli river was different from the present Paṭṭayār flowing through Nāñchināḍ, and secondly that there existed a vast mass of land, the so-called Lemūrian continent stretching south of Kanyākumari. The lines “பஃறுளியாற்றுடன் பண்மலை யடுக்கத்துக்குமரி கோடுங் கொடுங்கடல் கொள்ள” occurring in Śilappadikāram have been pressed into service in support of the theory. Here it is beyond my province to discuss the validity of this view. It is obvious that the lines refer only to the Kumari Peak, a chain of hills and the Pahṛuli river. Apparently, beyond Kanyākumari there lay some hillocks, relics of which can be seen to this day. By an erosion of the sea some of the group might have become submerged. But, to proceed further and to speak of a vast mass of land as having existed connecting South India, Australia and Africa is to stretch the imagination too far.

It is very important to realize that the river Pahṛuli, referred to in the classics, is none other than the Paṭṭayār of to-day running through Nāñchināḍ and flowing into the Indian Ocean at Cape Comorin. A Land Revenue record of the Travancore Government belonging to the year 920 M. E. (1745 A.D.), specifically refers to the present Paṭṭayār, as Paṭṭaliyār “Bhūtappāṇḍi vadakke paṭṭaliyārril chārakkālaṇayil ninnum vuyārti aṇa keṭṭi avide ninnum puttāṇiyiṭṭu āru veṭṭi kanniyākumari varekkum ārru vellam kondu viṭṭue,”

Since the Pāṇḍya King himself is described as lord of this Pahṛuli, the sovereignty of the monarch over Nāñchināḍ is an implied fact. Indeed, it is stated in the Puranānūru that the course of the river Pahṛuli itself was directed by the engineering skill of the king Vadimbalamba Ninga Nediyōn Pāṇḍiyan. ‘Maduraikkāñchi’ also supports the fact that the region near Kumari was under the proud

possession of the Pāṇḍyas. The early inscriptions again refer to the place as included in Purattāyanādu, which unquestionably formed a part of the Pāṇḍyan Empire. The Goddess Kumari was, in fact, revered as the family deity of the Pāṇḍyan Kings (தென்னவர் தம் குலதெய்வம் தென் குமரி). Thus there is no doubt that sometime after the period of Ptolemy Kanyākumari was captured by the Pāṇḍyas; it continued to remain in their hands for many succeeding centuries.

But while it is certain that Kanyākumari was under the Pāṇḍyas, the region to the north-west of it does not seem to have been under their sway all through the early period. That is evident from the frequent Pāṇḍya attacks on Kōṭṭar. Most probably, as noticed earlier, the region comprising the western part of Nāñchinād continued to be under the feeble rule of the Āyś.

During the Śaṅgam Age there occurred the Pāṇḍyan invasions of Bhūtappāṇḍiyan and probably of Nedūñcheliyan. There is no information about Pāṇḍyan invasions during the Kaṭabhra period, which forms a dark age in South Indian History.<sup>11</sup> It is not until we reach the 7th century A.D. that we seem to be on fairly secure ground in respect of our knowledge, because in addition to references in literature, we have the more reliable source about epigraphy to aid us, in the shape of copper plates and lithic records. So far as Nāñchinād is concerned, even for this period the bulk of our information is confined to Pāṇḍyan invasions.

### *Sēndan's invasions*

Among the Pāṇḍyan kings mentioned in the Vēlvikkudi grant and in the smaller Sinnamānūr Plates, the earliest ruler who invaded Kēraḷa, and probably on the way thither Nāñchinād also, is Sēndan as he is called in the Vēlvikkudi

grant and Jayantavarman in the Sinnamanur Plates (Jayanta was the Sanskritised form of Sēndan). The only reliable basis for the inference that he undertook expeditions beyond Āruvāyamoji is that Sēndan assumed the surname Vānava, the distinctive appellation of the Chēra. But it is not possible to determine the places in the Chēra country conquered by this Pāṇḍya monarch. Nāñchinād might have been invaded on the way to the Chēra dominion. So far as Nāñchinād is concerned, I venture to infer from certain surviving place names that he might have conquered parts of Nāñchinād and commemorated his victories by bestowing his name on villages and temples. At Tālakkudy, about 3 miles north-east of Kōṭṭār, there exists the temple of Sēndanīśvara-mudaiyār. Popular tradition connecting this shrine with Sēndan a Pāṇḍyan king is perhaps based on fact. Again, on the southern fringe of Alagiyapāṇḍipuram is found a temple known as Jayandanārkōil. Further a village in the Agastīśvaram Taluk, located about 5 miles south-west of Kōṭṭār is the village of Sēndanputtūr. It must be clearly noticed that in none of these places has any inscription been discovered corroborating the genesis of the names. But no other king bearing that name appears to have been associated with these villages, and hence, the suggestion appears to be valid. In this connection it is important to remember that earlier epigraphists like Venkayya, Krishna Sastri and K. V. Subramania Aiyar were inclined to identify this Sēndan with Nedūñcheliyan of Talayālaṅgānam fame on the ground that Cheliyan appears among the surnames of Jayantavarman. But Cheliyan seems to have been a common name assumed by Pāṇḍya sovereigns, as for example, Āryapañḍaikādanta Nedūñcheliyan Veṛrivēr-cheliyan. Moreover, if this Cheliyan Sēndan was the victor of Talayālaṅgānam, a battle so famous in literature as to lend a prefix to the name of its hero, it is inexplicable why that important

fight is not mentioned in the Vēlvikkudi grant which gives a long account of the achievement of the kings it names.<sup>12</sup>

### *Arikēsari Māravaṭman*

The next king who attacked Nāñchināḍ and places to the north of it was Jayantavarman's successor known as Arikēsari Māravaṭman in the Vēlvikkudi grant and the smaller Sinnamanūr plates, and as Aīkēsari Parānkuśan in the larger Sinnamanūr plates. Doubtless, he is identical with the king famous in legend and Tamil literature as the Kūn Pāṇḍya and as Ninga Śir Nedumāran, converted by saint Sambandar. The date of this illustrious monarch has been happily determined, thanks to the researches of the late Professor Sundaram Pillay, as ranging in the latter half of the 7th century A. D.<sup>13</sup> The Vēlvikkudi grant and the larger Sinnamanūr plates credit him with victories at Pāli, Nelvēli, Sennilam and Puliyūr, and also with a triumph over the Paravās and Kuṛunādu. These victories, as well as others at Koṭṭār and Vilinām are described in the commentary to the Iraiyanār Ahapporuḷ. Professor Nilakanta Sastri discredits the identification of Ninga Śir Nedumāran Pāṇḍya with the hero celebrated in the stanzas of the commentary to the Ahapporuḷ, on the ground that Vilinām does not figure in epigraphy earlier than the 8th century A.D. But I think that we cannot ignore how stone inscriptions form a principal source of information only subsequent to the 8th and 9th centuries in South India. Though the general historical value of the Ahapporuḷ is open to doubt, yet the corroboration of Nedumāran's victories furnished by the plates confirms the version in the Ahapporuḷ. The crux of the problem lay in identifying the battlefields mentioned in these accounts. Professor Sastri and other scholars admitted their difficulty in locating even

Kurunādu. But beyond the shadow of a doubt it can be identified with the region, roughly covered by the present Kalkulam Taluk abutting on the western boundary of Nāñchinād. The 'Mudaliyār Manuscript' refers to Ālūr as a village of Kurunālu. Almost every place mentioned in the Plates and in the Ahapporuļ can be located in and around Kurunālu, the stronghold of the Āys in this epoch. Nelvēli was attempted to be identified by epigraphists with Tirunelvēli, but obviously it may be taken to be the place bearing the same name Nelvēli even to-day, located to the north of modern Thuckalay in old Kurunādu.<sup>14</sup> In passing it may be mentioned that both the commentary on the Irāiyanār Ahapporuļ and the Periyapurāṇam lay the greatest emphasis on the victory at Nelvēli. Again, Puliyūr could have been none other than Puliyūrkuṭichi, half a mile to the north of modern Thuckalay. However, it has not been possible to identify Sennilam and Pāli. I venture to think that in so far as most of the battlefields have been located, the others mentioned are not perhaps figments of the imagination, but are real places which may be identified sometime. The probability is that Sennilam and Pāli were near Thuckalay. It may be observed that the brunt of the struggle in Nāñchinād appears to have fallen on Kōttār.

### *Kōchchaḍaiyan*

The son and successor of Arikēsari Mīravarman was the famous warrior known as Raḍādra. Daring and ambitious, he waged several wars with the neighbouring rulers. His assumption of the titles of 'Vānavan,' 'Chōla' and 'Kongarkōn' suggests his triumph over these monarchs. Among his exploits, a victory against an Āy-Vēļ at Marudūr is mentioned in the Vēlvikkuli grant. The vanquished king must have been the contemporary Āy ruler, an ancestor of Kōkkarunāndadakkan. Several writers have identified Marudūr

with Tiruppudaimarudūr near Ambāsamudram. Professor K. A. N. Sastri too, thought that it might be correct. But really it seems unsustainable. Ambāsamudram was within the heart of the Pāṇḍyan territory and a battle with the Āy chief could not have been fought there, unless the Āy had attempted to beard the lion in its own den. Surely, Raṇadhīra, a valiant warrior, would not have waited for an attack near his own capital by the petty Āy ruler. Marudūr may most apparently be identified with Marudattūr in Kuṛunādu, particularly because, in common parlance, the place is known as Marudūr.<sup>15</sup> It is significant that the temple of Tiruviḍaikkōṭṭu Mahādēva itself is in Marudattūr. And Tiruviḍaikkōdu was the seat of the Āys of this period as is clear from the inscriptions of Kokkarunāṇḍadakkan.

The Vēlakkudi Plates refer to two other victories of Kōchchadaiyan over Āy Vēl, one at Šeṅgodi and another at Pudānkōdu. Is it possible to locate these battlefields? Mr. Krishna Sastri suggested that Šeṅgodi and Pudānkōdu are not names of places but that they signify merely the regalia of the Āy King. Professor K. A. N. Sastri is inclined to adopt Mr. Krishna Sastri's view, though he adds that the text is not quite clear on the matter, implying the uncertainty of the interpretation. This surmise that the two words signify the regalia of the Āy king has appeared only on account of the failure to identify the places. Both Šeṅgodi and Pudānkōdu are, in fact, two villages in Kuṛunādu. Šeṅgoji is a hamlet near the famous Tiruvattār, the seat of Elini Ātan, the Śaṅgam celebrity. Pudānkōdu seems to be another form of the name Tiruvitnākōdu, a village in Kuṛunādu. Very likely it is identical with the place referred to as Tirumutānkōdu, in a Vaṭṭeluttu inscription of the 10th century A.D.<sup>16</sup> Mudānkōdu may be an alternative form of Pudānkōdu; or perhaps it is a case of an error in the

text. It should be observed that in Vaṭṭeluttu the formation of the letters வ and ய is nearly alike. In further support of the identification of Pudānkōḍu of the Vēḷvikkudi grant with Tirumutānkōḍu of Kuṛunāḍu, it may be mentioned that in the latter region numerous places bear names ending in kōḍu, for example, Kaṭṭiāmāṅkōḍu, Netṭayāṅkōḍu, Mēlāṅkōḍu, Kariñcāṅkōḍu, Tikkaṇāṅkōḍu, Pullālaṅkōḍu, Tiruviḍaikkōḍu, Viḷavaṅkōḍu, Iḍaiikkōḍu, Kadamūkkōḍu, Cirrukōḍu, Dēvikōḍu Pāgōḍu, Ālaṅgōḍu, Yērrakōḍu, Olakkōḍu, Kokkōḍu, Palākkōḍu Panrikōḍu and Veṭṭikōḍu.

Though no battle is stated to have been fought on the soil of Nāñchināḍ, the defeat of its rulers the Āys, must have meant the triumph over Nāñchināḍ as well. Indeed, it may be reiterated that the fact, that the Pāṇḍya proceeding from the east of Āruvāymoli fought battles only at Marudūr, Šēngōḍi and Pudānkōḍu shows that there was no other ruler besides the Āy immediately west of Āruvāymoli.

### *Rājasimha*

The son and successor of Kōchchadaiyan on the Pāṇḍya throne was Arikēsari Parāṅkuśa, Mīravarmā Rājasimha who ruled about the middle of the 8th century A.D. (740-765 A.D.). Information about his exploits is almost exclusively derived from the Vēḷvikkudi grant. Turning to those references which may have a bearing on the history of Nāñchināḍ, we come across the intriguing reference to the Chēra capital which runs thus:—

“ கூடல் வஞ்சி கோழி என்னு மாடமத  
மதில் புதுக்கியும் ”.

The reference is to the renewal of the walls and ramparts of the capitals of the Pāṇḍya, Chēra and Chōla. It is believed by some

that Vañchi the Chēra capital denoted Tiruvañchikkūlam and not Karūr of Trichinopoly District, but several Tamil scholars rightly locate the Chēra capital in Karūr. Even if Tiruvañchikkūlam had been attacked and the Chēra vanquished as the claim registered in the grant would make us believe, there is no means of ascertaining the route he adopted for reaching the place. If he had crossed the Āruvāymoļi Pass and proceeded westwards to combat the Chēra in his homeland he might have attacked and coquered Nāñchināļ on his way. But, not a single battle in this region is mentioned in the grant which records only a series of victories against the Pallavas. Moreover, since Rājasimha triumphed over the Koṅgu country and the Chālukyan king, he might have attacked the Chēra at Tiruvañchikkūlam by the northern side, passing by Coimbatore. At any rate, in the present state of our knowledge, no active contact of Rājasimha with Nāñchināļ can be said to have existed.

### *Jaṭila Parāntaka*

It was Rājasimha's son, the famous Jaṭila Parāntaka, the Māṇan Chādaiyan of the Ānamalai inscription and the donor of the Vēlakkudi and the Madras Museum Plates, who undertook a systematic and organized attack on the Āy Vēl. The Vēlakkudi Plates, besides referring to several other early exploits of Jaṭila Parāntaka record also his victory at Nāṭṭukkuṛumbu over an Āy Vēl, who headed a rebellion of the Kuṛumbas. Who were the Kuṛumbas and who was this Āy-Vēl? Could they have been one batch of the Vēlir whose seat of power lay near the modern Pudukkottah State, or does the reference apply only to the Āy-Vēl and his subjects of Kuṛunāļu in South Travancore? The description given of the Vēls as Kuṛunilamannar<sup>17</sup> in the epigraphs, appears to settle the identification in favour of the latter.

The Madras Museum Plates specifically mention that the Ay-Vēl ruler, the "Vēn-Mannan," was defeated and put to death, that his town "Viñnam" was destroyed and that "his elephants, horses, family, treasure and good country" were captured. The reference to the Ay-Vēl ruler as the "Vēn-mannan" shows the manner in which the name Vēnād has arisen. This glorious victory over the Vēn-Mannan must have been won by Māran Chādaiyan before the 17th year of his rule, because the Madras Museum Plates record his martial career only up to that stage.

But Māran Chādaiyan did not rest in peace. In the 23rd year of his rule, he was again obliged to march against the Ay ruler, Chādaiyan Karunandan of "Malai Nād," and it is recorded that he defeated the rebel and destroyed Ariviyūrkō ṭai. This place may be identified with Aruvikkarai in Kuñunādu.<sup>18</sup> Doubtless, Chādaiyan Karunandan was the Ay-Vēl ruler; obviously he was the successor of the king killed earlier at Viñnam. After his accession, Chādaiyan Karunandan might have defied the Pāṇḍyan power necessitating a fresh attack by Māran Chādaiyan. Chādaiyan Karunandan was the father of Kōkkarunandaḍakkan of the Huzur Office Plates; his name as well as the known details about him leave no room for doubt on the matter. Ilaṅkuḷam Kuñjan Piṭṭai suggests in his Kerala Charitra Praśnaṅga (p. 94) that another king reigned between Karunandan and Kōkkarunandaḍakkan. But the evidence for this postulate is not adequate.

A third attack on Malainādu by Māran Chādaiyan, the Pāṇḍyan king, occurred about the 27th year of his reign. This is learnt from the stone inscription, originally found at Āruvāymoḷi, which states that the Chēra army was able to pursue Māran Chādaiyan as far as Karaikkōṭṭai. Probably

the Chēra ruler had gone to the aid of the Āy-Vē!, and this time the tables were turned on the Pāṇḍya.

An inscription on a pillar at Viliñam belonging to the 8th century A.D. refers to the death of a hero during the capture of Viliñam. In fact the capture of Viliñam is frequently mentioned as an achievement of the Pāṇḍyan from the time of Nedūñchadaiyan Parantaka. The Pāṇḍyan rulers must have proceeded through Nāñchināḍ, because Viliñam was located to the north of Nāñchināḍ. It was noted for its sea-faring activities. We shall now continue the consideration of the Pāṇḍyan contact with Nāñchināḍ either by direct attacks or by their successful marches on Kerala passing through Nāñchināḍ.

Karunandadakkan's rule extended more or less over the whole of South Travancore, but Pāṇḍyan inscriptions of the same period are found in places like Šuchindram and Kanyākumari. Therefore, it is likely that Karunandadakkan's rule extended down to about Kōṭṭar in the south. In the north the Āy rule extended up to Tiruppattūr. An important fact ignored by Ilaṅkuḷam is that from the 9th century A.D., Nāñchināḍ was practically divided into two halves of which the southern part was known as Purattāyanāḍ. Equally important is the fact that these boundaries changed from time to time.

*Varaguna*: To complete the history of the Āys we may note here that according to the Huzur Office Plates, the next Āy ruler was Vikramāditya Varaguṇa. His inscriptions only upto his 28th regnal year are available. His Pāliyam Plates belong to M. E. 101 (A.D. 925). Therefore, Vikramāditya Varaguṇa's period of rule may be assumed

to have lasted between A.D. 885 and A.D. 925. His queen was Murugan Chēndi entitled Āykula Mahādēvi. After Varaguna we do not hear of any Āy ruler in Nāñchinād. Probably the Āys, pressed by the Pāṇḍyas, sought the protection of the Chēras. By this time Nāñchinād passed into the hands of the Chōlas. It is necessary to consider here the contact of Nāñchinād with the Pāṇḍyas from the time of Māran Chādaiyan down to the conquest of the Pāṇḍyan kingdom and Nāñchinād by the Imperial Chōlas.

### *Sri Māra Sri Vallabha :*

Māran Chādaiyan's son and successor Sri Māra Sri Vallabha<sup>19</sup> seems to have entered on an aggressive warfare against the Chēra king as also against several other rulers. The glowing account of his conquests recorded in the Larger Sinnamanūr Plates, at first sight, seems to be either a fantastic eulogy or an exaggeration of minor victories. But, when with reference to the conflict with the Chēra, the names of battle-fields mentioned are Kunnūr and Viliñam, the element of probability gains preponderance. Since Viliñam was one of the places attacked by the Pāṇḍya, a battle must have been fought either with the Āy-Vēl king (Vēn-Mannan) or with the combined forces of the Chēra and of the Āy-Vēl. Kunnūr may be identified with the village bearing that name to this day, and situated near Kollam; it indicates that the Pāṇḍya had plunged far into the interior. Whether he attacked any place in Nāñchinād is not known. The fact that Viliñam, and still farther north Kunnūr, are mentioned as the scenes of conflict suggests that Nāñchinād was not actively defended by the Āys and that probably the Pāṇḍyan authority was tacitly recognised there.

Perhaps the fragmentary inscription of one Chādaiyan Māran in Suchindram, dated 8th Year Simha, and one of the

earliest epigraphs in the temple, is ascribable to the period of Śrī Māṇa Śrivallabha. He was a son of Māṇa Chādaiyan and hence the name Chādaiyan Māṇa appropriately befits him. Moreover, the palaeography of the fragmentary inscription, as also the manner of dating the regnal year, suggest that it belongs to a date earlier than that of Rājasimha Chādaiyan Māṇa, the famous donor of the Larger Sinnamanūr Plates.

### *Vīra Nārāyaṇa Chādaiyan :*

While little is known about Varaguṇavarman, the immediate successor of Śrī Māṇa Śrivallabha, Vīranārāyaṇa Chādaiyan who ascended the throne about 880 A.D., appears to have been actively connected with Nāñchinād. Some of the early inscriptions in Śuchindram belong to his reign. A significant feature is that the endowments were made by the Chief Minister and General of the Pāṇḍya sovereign Māṇa Chādaiyari, as Vīra Nārāyaṇa was otherwise called. The larger Sinnamanūr Plates state that this monarch endowed many agrahārās and numberless dēvasthānams and taṭākas. It is likely that Śuchindram was one of the sacred places patronised by him. The fact that the Śuchindram inscriptions of his period bear the regnal years of his reign is a clear proof that the locality was under his sway. Vīranārāyaṇasseri and Vīranārāyaṇamaṅgalam, two villages located within a few miles of Kōṭṭār perhaps owe their names to this Pāṇḍya sovereign. That Vīranārāyaṇa Pāṇḍya had Śrī Vānavan Mahā-dēvi, evidently a Chēra princess for his queen, suggests his close contact with the West Coast. Vīra Nārāyaṇa Chādaiyan claims among his exploits the capture of Ten Vilīññanagar.

About 900 A.D. Vīranārāyaṇa was succeeded by Rajasimha, the celebrated donor of the Larger Sinnamanūr Plates. Evidently he continued to be in possession of Śuchindram and probably of other places in Nāñchinād, at least till the 16th year of

his reign, as inferred from his epigraphs.<sup>21</sup> However, Rājasimha's power, and along with it, the supremacy of the early Pāṇḍyas was crushed by Parāntaka Chōla.

Thus it is evident that during the period we have traversed, i.e. during the first ten centuries of the Christian Era, the region of Nāñchinād, as well as the adjoining Kuṛunādū and Padappānād, were under the rule of the Āy Kings. At times, particularly between the 3rd and 8th century A.D. their power was reduced to a low ebb. This coincided with the period about which our knowledge is scanty. From the circumstances, that on occasions of Pāṇḍya incursions into Nāñchinād in the 6th and 7th centuries no king other than the Āy is mentioned, and that the Huzur Office Plates reveal the existence of the Āy kingdom with its stronghold in Tiruviḍaikkōdu, it is obvious that Āy chieftains had maintained the position, though over a restricted sphere, during the intervening period. I venture to think that at some unknown date subsequent to the 3rd century A.D. the Āy kings were dislodged from their original seat of Podiyil hills, probably by the Chēra power and driven to the south. There exists a hill near Tiruviḍaikkōdu known to this day as Vēṭi-malai. Reduced to a subordinate position, the Āy kings might have descended to the region of Kuṛunādū and continued to rule over the extreme south down to Kanyākumari.

From about the 7th century A.D. there occurs in lithic inscriptions as well as in copper plates the name Vēṇād denoting a region in South Travancore. What was that region? Who was its king? When did he emerge into the horizon of South Indian politics? And what was his relation to the Chēra sovereign? These are interesting and important questions in the history of Nāñchinād, and indeed, in that of entire South India.

Among the available epigraphs the earliest one which employs the name Vēṇāḍ is that of Jatila Parāntaka, known also as Maṭan Chādaiyan or Nedūñchādaiyan, the donor of the VēlviKKudi and Madras Museum Plates. We have already observed how the Madras Museum Plates in describing the victory of this Pāṇḍya monarch over the Āy-Vēl ruler refer to the latter specifically as the Vēṇ-Mannan. It is evident from this that Vēṇāḍ derived its name by virtue of its having been the land of the Vēls. Vēl+Nāḍu most naturally gave rise to the name Vēṇāḍ.<sup>22</sup>

This designation Vēṇāḍ as denoting the land of the Āys must have been in usage as early as the Śāngam Age. Tolkāppiyam speaks of Vēṇāḍ as one of the twelve Nāḍus into which Tamilakam was then divided.<sup>23</sup> Here a doubt may appear. The rise to prominence of the Āy power was witnessed only in the 2nd century A.D., while Tolkāppiyam is believed to have appeared a few centuries earlier. But, in this connection it is important to observe that though during Añdiran's reign there occurred an expansion of the Āy authority, it does not mean that the power was not in existence earlier. Whether we accept or not the view that the name Hida Rāja figuring in the Shahbazgarhi version of Aśoka's Edict XIII denotes the King of the shepherds, the ancestor of the Āy kings, there is a great probability that the Āys had appeared in South Indian History at an early date.<sup>24</sup> Prior to the age of Tolkāppiyam the Āy power could have secured a foothold in the southern region of modern Travancore.<sup>25</sup>

While the etymology of the name Vēṇāḍ seems clear to us, certain writers have sought to offer various other explanations.<sup>26</sup> Mr. T. K. Vēlu Pillai, among others, attempted to derive Vēṇāḍ from Vānavar, holding that

Vānava was the appellation of the Chēra from time immemorial.<sup>27</sup> It is hardly necessary to show that this derivation is far-fetched, if it is traceable to Vānavar the name would have been Vānād and not Vēnād.

Equally ingenious is Mr. Shangunny Menon's attempt to connect Vēnād with 'Vēnu' meaning bamboo. Vēnād is said to signify the land where bamboo grew in abundance. But the growth of bamboo is not confined to South Travancore; in fact, it is still more luxuriant in Central and North Travancore. Thus, the derivation of Vēnād as the land of the Vēls seems to be the most convincing one.

Here, it is pertinent to observe that the region described as Vēnād was also spoken of in a general sense as Malainādu and Malaimāṇḍalam. Mr. Vēlu Pillai's view that Malaiṇḍu specified the land lying far to the north of Āynādu is untenable. Epigraphic references are clear on the matter. For example, we find from an inscription ;—

“இராஜாதித்த தேவர் பெரும்படை நாயகர்  
மலைநாட்டு நந்திக்கரைப் புத்தரர் வெள்ளன் குமரன்”. 28

It must be remembered that Tirunandikkarai, occurring in this inscription lay in the heart of Kuṟunaṇḍu, not far away from Tiruvāṭṭār. Again Tiruvitāṇḍōdu near Tiruviḍai-kkōdu is found mentioned as part of Malai Nādu;

“மலைமண்டலத்து திருவிதாங்கோட்டு இரவிவன்மராய குலசேகரப்  
பெருமான் பெருந்தெருவில் செட்டு வேலாயுதப் பெருமான்”. 29

Moreover, as noticed earlier, the reference to Chadaiyan Karuṇandan as the ruler of Malainādu in the Vēlvikkudi Plate was none other than the ancestor of the Āy king who ruled with Tiruviḍaikkōdu as his seat of power. Thus

it is evident that Āynād, Vēṇād and Malainādu represented the same piece of territory.

Mr. Vēlu Pillai attempting to show that these designations specified different tracts of land, held that Āynād lay due north from Kanyākumari abutting on Vēṇād, and that Malainādu comprised Vēṇād and other regions to the north of it. But, as has been shown earlier, places west of present Nāñchinād were definitely included in Āy territory. Not to speak of Tiruviḍaikkōdu, Marudattūr, Šeṅgodi and Pudāñkōdu, there lay within this region Vilīñam, an important town of the Āys. It is difficult to imagine the existence of a kingdom of Vēṇād to the north of Vilīñam which is only about 8 miles from Trivandrum, especially because the Chēra ruler or his immediate vassal appears to have been ruling with Kollam as his seat of power.

Mr. Vēlu Pillai's proposition of a Vēṇād independent of and different from Āynād appears to have been advanced in order to support his pet theory that Vēṇād, the predecessor of erstwhile Travancore, was never conquered by either the Pāṇḍyas or Chōlas. Apart from the fact mentioned earlier that the Vēṇ-Mannan was defeated by Māran Chādaiyan, earlier Pāṇḍyan kings like Sēndan and Rājasimha are known to have assumed the surname of Chēra, which affords a clear indication of their having vanquished the Chēra. It is inexplicable how and where the imaginary Vēṇād ruler could have maintained his independence while both the Āy ruler on the one hand and the Chēra monarch on the other were defeated by the Pāṇḍyas. In truth, this attempt at establishing a unique and lofty position for Vēṇād is fruitless.

The crux of the problem lies in the fact that Kalkulam, comprising places like Putāñkōdu and Tiruviḍaikkōdu, is

known to have been the seat of the Vēṇāḍ ruler.<sup>30</sup> This was exactly the same region which formed the stronghold of the later Āy monarchs.

That Vēṇāḍ which subsequently became transformed into Tiruvitāṅkōḍu or Tiruvitaṅkōre was none other than the Āyñāḍ of old is further substantiated by the following circumstances. In none of the early Tamil works or inscriptions is any reference found to a kingdom of Tiruvitāṅkōḍu. While we hear of 'Nāñchilnāṭtu Adiganūr', 'Puṛattāyanāṭtu Kanyākumari', 'Kuṛunāṭtu Ālūr' and so on, we do not find any mention of a place as part of Tiruvitāṅkōḍu. It is interesting to learn that the deity at the Ālūr temple is known as Chēra Chōla Pāṇḍya Mahādēvar.

Further, a significant fact to be remembered in this connection is that Tiruvitāṅkōḍu, now a town near Thuckalay, was the seat of the early Vēṇāḍ king. As noticed earlier, the Vēlvikkudi grant speaks of one Putāṅkōḍu where the Āy king was defeated. This Putāṅkōḍu was found to be a probable variant of Mutāṅkōḍu occurring in early inscriptions. It is interesting to note in passing how the name Mutāṅkōḍu took its origin. In the old Viṣṇu temple at Tiruvitāṅkōḍu is found engraved a Sanskrit verse which describes the enshrined deity as 'Vaḍakkōḍa dēva.' The epigraphist who published the inscription translates this appellation as 'the god who is in the hollow of a banyan tree.'<sup>31</sup> It is very likely therefore that the original name of the village was Mūṭalaṅkōḍu (மூடாலங் கோடு) which became corrupted in course of time into Mūtāṅkōḍu. The conclusion suggested is that the name Mūtāṅkōḍu became transformed into Tiruvitāṅkōḍu with the addition of the prefix of Tiru, and was subsequently

applied to the whole of modern Travancore. Attempts on the part of local patriots to trace the etymology of the name Tiruvitāṅkōdu to imaginary appellations like Śrīvālumkōdu, meaning ‘the abode of Lakṣmi,’ or Śrīvardhanapuram,’ meaning the town of increasing prosperity, are nothing if not chauvinistic. It is important to remember that till the 18th century the principal seat of the Vēṇāḍ sovereign was in the Kalkuḷam Taluk, with palaces at the towns of Tiruvitāṅkōdu and Kalkuḷam. There is a Matilakam or Padmanābhasvāmy temple record stating that the Kalkuḷam fort was renamed into Padmanābhapuram where the old palace stands to this day.<sup>32</sup>

### *Social Life and Culture in early Nāñchināḍ*

The political, social and religious institutions of the people of Nāñchināḍ appear to have been in the main similar to those found in the rest of Tamilakam in early times. This is particularly true of the Śaṅgam Age in respect of which the sources of information are identical. In fact, not only Nāñchināḍ, but the major part of modern Travancore, epitomised in its limited sphere all the natural features and social organisations of the wide Tamil country. In the names of several places in Travancore the old regional nomenclature prevalent in the days of Tolkāppiyam survives. Peruenil, a village in Chānganāśseri, is found mentioned in the inscriptions of the place as Peruneydal, meaning a large Neydal tract. Veṇ-kuriṇji, Mulla-puḷa and Marutamaṇ are some of the other villages in Travancore. These seem to reinforce the view that the social life prevalent in the region was not different from that of the rest of Tamil Nāḍu.

### *Political Institutions*

Hereditary monarchy seems to have been an accepted rule. No instance of a disputed succession or civil war

among the Āys has come to our notice, while on the other hand, among the early Chōlas and Pāṇḍyas occasional disputes among rival claimants are known to have arisen. The king was essentially an absolute monarch; but according to the prevailing idea of the times he was more considered a benevolent protector of the people than a self-willed despot. He followed the wise counsel of the ministers and other learned men. The kings had but a few limited though important functions. Engagements in offensive or defensive warfare, as well as affording equal protection and justice to the people were the common duties. For the rest, the rulers were invariably surrounded by beggar, bards, who eulogised them in their poems and were rewarded amply. These men of learning played no small part in influencing the outlook and policies of the rulers.

Several poets have sung in praise of the unbounded liberality of the Āy kings. Āy Andiran is reckoned to have been the first of the seven 'Vallals' or paragons of charity. He realised that it was a duty incumbent on him to give without expecting anything in return even in the other world. Nāñchil Valluvan too, was liberal in his patronage of the learned and poor. Though our information is exclusively onesided, it enables us to gather the prevailing notions of a king's duties and responsibilities. The love of learning and of charity on the part of monarchs described in the poems indicates that the rulers were imbued by these high ideals. It is well known that the ideals of monarchy laid down in the Kural are of a very high order, and these seem to have been constantly pressed on the monarch's attention by the numerous poets of the land in the age we are dealing with. Kingship had gained considerably in strength and popular esteem by the epoch of the Kural.

War played a dominant part in their scheme of things. Few kings could escape without involving themselves in defensive or offensive warfare. This was remarkably so in Nāñchinād, both during the Śaṅgam Age and during the period of the incessant Pāṇḍyan invasions between the 6th and 10th century A.D. The common practice was for the kings themselves to lead their armies in person to the battle. On the field the kings used war chariots; and besides foot-soldiers, they employed horses and elephants in war.

Among the Āy kings and the chieftains of Nāñchil Hills, as among all the Tamil monarchs of the Śaṅgam Age, a high standard of martial spirit prevailed. That the women of Tamil Nādu too, were animated by a lofty ideal of martial spirit is evident from the Classics.

We have no specific evidence of the Council of five, the 'aimperumkuļu' or the group of eight officials the 'enpērāyam' assisting the king. References to the existence of these institutions are found in the Śilappadikāram and Maṇimēkalai of the Tamil Land. It is presumable that they were adopted by the Āy kings as well. The visits of the travelling bards would have been an easy source of transmission of royal customs and institutions. However, these councils and groups of attendants appear to have formed little more than a part of the king's paraphernalia on ceremonial occasions. In the present state of our knowledge it is difficult to accept the late Mr. Kanakasabhai Pillai's statement that 'the council of representatives safeguarded the rights and privileges of the people.'

But, undoubtedly the villages had developed a remarkable system of rural administration from an early time. The circumstance that the kings and chieftains of Nāñchinād were

frequently involved in war must have naturally led to the growth of virile village institutions which attended the common affairs. Each village had a manram or the village sabha where the people transacted the business of the village. It played a leading part in the administration of justice. The king too utilised these assemblies for consulting public opinion on certain questions of importance.

Nor were the villages isolated units. Assemblies of the chief men of several villages in meetings of piḍāgais, and even of the nādu as a whole, might have been common from early times. The 'Mudaliyār Manuscripts' present a vivid picture of these organisations in the 16th and 17th centuries. But it is obvious that they could not have sprung up all too suddenly. Their virility at a later age is an indication that they should have continued to function over a long period. There is evidence to show that before the 13th century the whole of Nāñchināḍ was divided into 12 piḍāgais and that there were piḍāgai Kūṭṭams as well as Nāṭṭukkūṭṭams when the chiefs of all villages met to decide important questions of common interest.

### *Social Life*

In respect of the social history of the period under consideration the first question that arises is the extent to which Āryanisation of this region had taken place. It is indisputable that even several centuries prior to the Christian Era the infiltrations of the Āryans into Nāñchināḍ, the southernmost corner of India, had begun. But it took a long time to influence the indigenous culture. References to brāhmaṇins and to their high social position are found in the early Tamil Classics. Tolkāppiyānār, the author of the earliest Tamil work extant, was himself a brāhmaṇin. Tolkāppiyam accords the highest social eminence to brāhmaṇins, and refers to the fourfold classification of castes, antaṇar (brāhmaṇins), araśar (kṣhatriyas) vaṇikar (merchants) and vellāl as (agriculturists).

The introduction of the traditional fourfold classification was, no doubt, effected by the Āryans. But the sub-division of the last caste into many groups in accordance with the occupations followed by them was mainly based upon the indigenous divisions. It appears to have been the product of the fusion of the Āryan and Dravidian ideas. References to Veḷālas, Maṇavar, and Āyar abound. The distinctions which had originally existed among the Dravidians based on geographical and natural features of the regions—the nomad, the hunter, the fisherman, the herdsman and the farmer reflecting respectively the occupations of people in the desert, the hill, the sea-coast, the forest and the riverine regions, might have shown a tendency to get petrified and absorbed into a new substance with the onrush of the Āryan institution of caste.

But it seems strange that Mr. Kanakasabhai Pillai should have suggested that the division of classes amongst the Tamils bears a striking resemblance to the seven divisions among the Magadhans as described by Megasthenes. For one thing it is difficult to find any direct association between the Magadhans and the Tamilians. To postulate a theory of connection between the two, on the ground that the Tamil kingdoms had "Five Great Assemblies" as in Megadha, is certainly unconvincing. Secondly, the conclusions which Megasthenes arrived at, are themselves based on an incorrect appreciation of the existing divisions. Assuredly, spies or overseers did not then, or any time, constitute a separate caste, as Megasthenes has taken them to be.

It would be interesting to know the caste to which the Āys belonged. That leads to the question whether they were original inhabitants of the land or were immigrants into the region of the Podiyil Malai. Some writers trace their descent from the great Veḷ who is believed to have taken his birth

from the fire pit in the northern mountain and ruled Dvāraka. In support of this, Kapilar's verse in *Puṛanānūru* (201) is quoted, in which Iruṅgōvēl, a member of the Vēlir line is stated to have been descended from the great Vēl of the North. This is sought to be reinforced by references from the Purāṇas which hold that the great Yādus branched off from Dvāraka into a number of groups like Bhōjas, Vṛṣṇi and Yādavās. Added to these is the fact that Vikramāditya Varaguṇa, the Āy ruler, states in his Pāliyam Plates that he belonged to the Vṛṣṇi tribe.

Nevertheless, it seems rather difficult to accept this account of their origin as historically reliable. Tracing a glorious descent and constructing ingenious genealogies were not uncommon in our country. And poets, as well as Purāṇic writers, were none too few to furnish a realistic touch to the mythical legends. Perhaps some of the Āys came from the north. Nachinārkiniyār records the tradition that Agastya brought with him the Vēlir, the descendants of Kṛṣṇa. Just as the legend of Agastya itself is now rightly interpreted as an allegoric version of the advent of the Aryans into South India, this tradition perhaps records nothing but the immigration of the Vēlir into Tamilakam. But, to proceed beyond this and to associate them with Dvāraka and Kṛṣṇa is to transport ourselves to the realm of myths.

Regarding the caste of the Āys, legends accord to them the position of Kṣatriyās. This is supported by the Purāṇic account ascribing to the Yādavās the descent from Yadu. This social promotion appears to be no more true to facts than the grounds on which occur the recent elevations of several castes to the rank of Kṣatriyās. Some writers like Kanakasabhai Pillai and Rao Sahib M. Raghava Aiyangar

connect the Vēlir with Vellālas. What appears probable is that the Ays were originally shepherds and cowherds, the name Āy or Āyar being derived from the word Ā meaning a cow. Either when a northern tribe of Vēlir became fused with them or when they themselves assumed royal power, legends were created with a view to giving them a glorified origin and an exalted caste.

In this connection it is noteworthy that there is an interesting group of people in the Kalkuṭam Taluq of South Travancore called Kṛṣṇavakaikkār. They live in various villages round about Tiruviḍaikkōdu and Tiruvitamkōdu. Perhaps they are descendants of Āys. It is a significant fact that certain families among them are formally informed about important domestic occurrences like births or deaths in the royal family of Travancore. Members of these houses observe pollution in connection with deaths in the royal family. The Kṛṣṇavakaikkār were originally classed as Yādayās or shepherds, though latterly most of them have betaken themselves to agriculture. Apparently they belong to the stock of the Āys.

A remarkable feature in the popular traditions in Nāñchināḍ is that people of several castes believe that they were immigrants from the Cōromāndel region. Puhār or Kāverippūmpaṭṭinām is the place from which the ancestors of several people are said to have come. On the destruction of this ancient capital of the Chōlās they immigrated into Nāñchināḍ. Among people who are supposed to have come are the Vellālas, the Mudaliyārs, the Chettis, the Kaikkōlars and the Chāliyās. In the native folklore and popular songs like Villuppāṭṭu these legends have entered. It is difficult to say how far they are based on fact.

The status of women in Tamilian society was remarkably high. There was an air of rustic simplicity and freedom from later-day cant and conventions. Women mixed freely in the routine life as in the gay amusements of the day. Not to speak of the women of the poorer classes who worked as hawkers or vendors, the rich too were free from any kind of conventional seclusion. As a result of the social freedom prevalent among the Tamils of those days it was possible for young men and women to court each other prior to marriage. There was scope for a rustic and natural love arising between couples. This feature was abundantly reflected in the 'love poetry' of the early period. No wonder that one of the three parts of *Tirukkural* was devoted to love. The romance of couples in the hilly and forest areas was of a still more rustic and simple pattern than in the plains. Instances of disappointment in love leading to suicide were not uncommon. It is worthy of note that ordinarily unflinching attachment and fidelity existed among the married couples. The fidelity of Kurava girls is immortalised in *Kalittogai* (Stanza 39). If the prevalence of a high standard of morality side by side with freedom and absence of prudery is a mark of civilisation, the Tamils have every reason to be proud of their ancestors.

The numerous types of amusements and the different patterns of music and dance and the wide variety of instruments that were used, of which so much is known, bespeak of a high level of attainment in the arts. The flute with holes permitting of different modulations, single and double-faced drums, and pipes of various kinds, accompanied the lute in every musical concert. Among the dances, the Kuravai in which 8 or 9 persons danced standing in a circle and clasping each other's hands was a favourite form of amusement. A regular course of musical

instruction was given to girls from an young age. In fact, the science and practice of all the fine arts were highly developed among the ancient Tamils. Music and Dance received the most important attention. It is notable that as early as the Śaṅgam Age the influence of Āryan ideas and themes like Kṛṣṇa deceiving the Asuras had entered the indigenous patterns.

In the arts of painting and sculpture also the Tamils had attained a remarkable degree of proficiency. There are references in the Classics to the paintings of gods, men and animals besides lute and other musical instruments painted with a variety of colours on the walls of public buildings. But the images of gods and goddesses in the temples were made only of mortar, though they were painted exquisitely. No mention is found of images or statues made of such enduring materials as stone or metal before the 8th century A. D. Afterwards stone images became common.

### *Education*

There seems to have occurred between the 5th and 8th centuries A.D. a considerable inflow of Āryan population by means of settlements of Brāhmaṇin colonies. True, even after the 8th century A.D., the practice of settling brāhmaṇin colonists near new temples or old ones was common in South India. But so far as Nāñchinād and the regions in its vicinity are concerned, a considerable number of such settlements was established during the period 5th to the 8th century A.D. They appeared by the side of temples already in existence like those of Śuchīndram, Kanyākumari, Darśanamkōpe, or in places where new shrines were established as in Pārvatīpuram and Putugrāmam. It was the fashion with kings to settle such colonists near temples. It need hardly be mentioned that these colonists formed the real agents in the infusion of

Aryan ideas and culture. These settlements or colonies were known as brahmadēyas or chaturvēdimāṅgalams.

The term chaturvēdimāṅgalam denotes a village inhabited primarily by pious and learned brāhmaṇins, well versed in the Vēdas. Brahmadēyas, Maṅgalams or Agraḥāras, as they were variously called, were mostly created by royal grants. Faith in the unique merit of the gift of land (bhūdāna) to brāhmaṇins explains the endowment of numerous brahmadēyas. Invariably the object of the endowment was to enable the donees to lead a religious life performing the rites and ceremonies of the village temple. The rights of cultivation, as also of supervision and control of the lands within the boundaries of the brahmadēya were bestowed on the brāhmaṇin beneficiaries by the gift deed itself. This is inferred from a typical grant of a brahmadēya recorded in the Madras Museum Plates and another in an inscription at Agastīśvaram, a suburb of Nagercoil. Ordinarily when the gift was made, the donor renounced all rights over the villages including the right of taxation. The statement “ஸற்வபரிகாரமாக நீரோட்டடிக் குடுக்கப்பட்டது” occurring in several of these grants indicates the transfer of the entire right.

The great importance of these colonies is that almost from the very beginning the brāhmaṇin settlers began teaching the Vēdas, philosophy, grammar and other subjects. The instruction was, no doubt, confined to brāhmaṇin pupils.

In other temples endowments were made for the free feeding of brāhmaṇins. The feeding hall was called Śālai, and in places where this assumed a prominence the village itself came to be known as Śālai. It is important to remember that to these Śālais were attached libraries, and they turned out to be prominent centres of learning. There is clear evidence to show that in and around

Nāñchīnād there existed several such Śālais. The famous Kāndalūr Śālai, Karaikkāndēśvaram, Talaikkulam, Pārtivāśekharapuram and Kanyākumari were some of the important ones. The Huzur Office Plates (published in the T.A.S. Vol. I) refer to the construction of a temple and a college at Pārtivāśekharapuram and the making or rich endowments to both by chieftain Kōkkarunḍandaḍakkan. The following passage occurring therein deserves special notice;

“காந்தனூர் மரியாதையால் தொண்ணூற்றைவர் சட்டர்க்கு சாலையும் செய்தான் ஸ்ரீ கோக்கருந்தடக்கன்”.

It is noteworthy how the inscription states that the Vēdic College was founded on the model of the institution at Kāndalūr Śālai. From this it may be inferred that Kāndalūr Śālai was an ancient model seat of learning, which deserves to be considered a Taxila or Nālanda of the South. Incidentally it may be mentioned that the traditional view held by scholars regarding Rāja Rāja's ‘காந்தனூர் சாலை கலமறுத்தருளி’ does not seem acceptable. As Kavimāṇi Desikavinayakam Pillay has shown, it refers to nothing more than the fixing of the endowment for the Śālai. A recently discovered inscription recording an endowment for the teaching of Jaiminiya Sāma Vēda dispels all doubts regarding the interpretation of கலமறுத்து. It runs thus :

‘ மெய்க்காட்டுத் தீட்டினுரெல்லாரும் தம்மில் அஞ்சபுரியிலும் சொல்லீக் கலமறுத்து நல்லாரானார் ஒருவற்கு விருத்தியான இக் காச மூன்றும் இத்தேவரே கோடுப்பாராக ’. (266 of 1923).

There was again a famous Śālai at Kanyākumari. The reference to it in inscriptions as ஸ்ரீ வல்லவப் பெருஞ்சாலையான ராஜ ராஜப் பெருஞ்சாலை ” shows that it was in existence even before the time of Rāja Rāja. Probably it was established

by Śrī Mara Śrī Vallabha Pāṇḍya who commenced his rule early in the 9th century A.D.

### *Tamil Language*

While the learning propagated in the Śālais directly helped only the brāhmaṇins, it was bound to influence the culture of the land. In several respects the intermingling of the two languages and civilisations of the north and south are traceable. But Tamil never lost its individuality; and in Nāñchināḍ, the southernmost end of India, it has all through the ages maintained its distinct position. It is notable that from the days of the Śaṅgam Age Nāñchināḍ and the adjoining regions were conspicuous for the patronage and development of the Tamil language. The great work Tolkāppiyam had to be accepted by the Śaṅga or Sabha which was then presided over by Atamkōṭṭātan (அதங்கோட்டு ஆதன்), who was obviously a native of modern South Travancore. Atamkōdu is a village situated southwest of Tiruvitāmkōdu, a prominent centre of the Āy Kings. Āśān is a common honorific appellation of savants and experts in learning, in astrology, medicine, etc. Again, in the 8th century A.D., a poet, Ilamperumānār, (இளம்பெருமானர்) of Kōṭṭār was one of the four poets who have sung about the king Perumpidukumuttaraiyan (பெரும்பிது முத்தகரயன்). This is learnt from an inscription in the Śiva Temple at Chēndalai or சந்திரலேகச் சதுரவேதி மங்கலம், near Trichinopoly. Finally, it is pertinent to recall at this juncture that works like Padirruppattu, Aiṅkuṇūrū, Kalittogai, Śilappadikāram, Purapporuṅveṅbāmalai, Ponvaṇṇattandādi, Tirukkailāya Jñāna Ulā, Perumāl Tirumoli, to mention the prominent ones, were all works contributed by or under the patronage of Chēra and Vēṇāḍ Kings of old. Very recently among the palm-leaf manuscripts found in the palace at Trivandrum has been discovered an old version of 'Harichandra Veṅbā', now being

edited by Rao Sahib M. Raghava Aiyangar. These prove clearly that Tamil was in a flourishing condition in the whole of Travancore.

### *Religion*

That the Tamilians of old worshipped a multitude of gods and goddesses like Muruga, Kāli, Mādan and Isakki is gathered from their early literature as well as from the surviving relics. The huntsmen and hill tribes or Kuṭavas worshipped the heroic God of War, Muruga. Even to-day some old shrines dedicated to Muruga are found in Kumārakōil, (Vēli Malai) Maruṅgūr and Āruvāyamoḷi in and near Nāñchināḍ. Temples dedicated to Muruga were generally built on the top of high hills or in the midst of dense forests.

The shepherd class worshipped their national hero Kṛṣṇa and his elder brother Balarāma. It is remarkable that as contrasted with the position on the Cōromāndel coast, Nāñchināḍ and Kuṛunāḍu have numerous Viṣṇu temples. Some of them are famous ones like those at Tiruvāṭṭār, Tiruveṇpatiśāram and Parakkai. This feature is verily ascribable to the influence of the Āyś, who were traditional worshippers of Viṣṇu. Tracing their descent to the Yādavas and their original home to Dvāraka, they were ardent devotees of Viṣṇu. The association of modern Travancore rulers to Padmanābha is itself attributable to the same influence.

From the early period, among the higher classes of Tamils the favourite deity was Śiva. Doubtless there occurred a gradual fusion in the pantheon of gods and goddesses worshipped by the people as a consequence of the Āryan influence. Śiva, Kāli and Muruga were pre-eminently non-Āryan deities and they were admitted into the Hindu Pantheon as a result of the admixture. Śilappadikrāam shows how in all the great temples served by the brāhmaṇins in the Tamil country, images of the

four gods, Śiva, Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma and Muruga were set up. Kālī was held to be another form of Pārvati, the consort of Śiva.

In Nāñchinād, besides Hindu temples there appear to have existed certain Jaina shrines. The pagoda at Nagercoil was unquestionably a Jain temple till the 15th century A.D. as inscriptions testify. The mention of endowments to Jayaguṇa Paṇḍita in an inscription in the temple makes it clear. But it is difficult to estimate the date of the origin of the Jain temple. The glorious age of Jainism in South India appeared in the early centuries of the Christian era, while the period of the Nāyanmār witnessed a revival of Hinduism. It is possible that the Jain temple at Nagercoil had arisen before the 6th century A.D. Moreover, there is epigraphic evidence to show that there existed a flourishing Jain colony in Kuṇḍi near Śuchindram till the 13th century.

In this connection it may be noted that the Āy ruler Vikramāditya Varaguṇa who succeeded Kōkkarunanda Aḍakkan became a convert to Buddhism and bestowed gifts on both the Buddhist temple at Śrimūlavāsam and the Jain temple at Chitāral. This shows that both Jainism and Buddhism had appeared in this region some time before the 9th century A.D.

### *Economic Conditions*

That agriculture was the principal occupation of the people of Nāñchinād from time immemorial, need hardly be mentioned. The fertility of the soil had evoked the praise of several poets in the Śaigam Age, and in recent times too, it is widely recognised that Nāñchinād is the granary of Travancore. Among the agricultural produce, besides paddy, pepper, gingelly, cardamom and other spices were common; and they were exported to other countries. Spinning cotton was an occupation of women, and even silk was woven.

Both Tamil works and early inscriptions testify to the fact that Vāriyūr and Maṇarkudý in Nāñchinād were engaged in the manufacture of salt. Besides, an extensive trade in fish is known to have flourished. There is a remarkable concurrence of testimony between the Śāṅgam works and the Periplus on the commercial activity of the ports of the West Coast and the Coromandel Coast.

The author of the 'Periplus' of the Erythrean Sea' who wrote about 60 A.D. mentions among other ports Toṇḍi, Muśiri and Komari. The writer goes on to describe at some length the sanctity of Komari and the large concourses of people who used to visit the land. Ptolemy too mentions the flourishing port of Komari. It is learnt from the Padiruppattu that at these sea ports there were warehouses maintained for storing foreign merchandise. It is interesting to note that the valuable products of the country were sold to foreign merchants for gold, while paddy was adopted as the usual measure of value for internal trade.

In the sphere of internal trade Kōṭṭār appears to have gained a remarkable prominence from early times. Both Pliny and Ptolemy mention it in their accounts. That it was considered as the principal town of Nāñchinād is testified to by early Tamil works. Pāṇḍikkōvai, for example, describing the victories of Nedumāran, the Pāṇḍyan king, refers to the capture of Kōṭṭār in the following lines :—

“குருமா நெடுமதிற் கோட்டாற் றரன் கொண்ட  
தென்னன் கன்னிப் பெருமான் ”

During the period of Pāṇḍya attacks on Nāñchinād, Kōṭṭār had to bear the brunt of the struggle. Early in his reign Rāja Rāja captured it and renamed it as "Mummuḍi-Chōḷapuram."

On the whole, in respect of the political, social, religious and economic conditions of Nāñchinād before the 10th century A.D. we find a close affinity with those of the rest of the Tamil Nād. This was most conspicuous in the development of the Tamil language, literature and culture.

*The Chōlas and Nāñchinād :*

The effective conquest of Nāñchinād by the Chōlas began with Rāja Rāja I. It is learnt from his inscriptions that by A.D. 985 he had asserted his supremacy over Nāñchinād.<sup>84</sup>

A doubt has arisen whether he attacked the Pāṇḍyan country first and later Nāñchinād and the Chēra dominions farther north of it. But the Tiruvālaṅgādu Plates as well as Rāja Rāja's inscription belonging to his 20th year speak of the attack and capture of Madurai first and only subsequently came the capture of Vilīñam and Kuḍanādu. However, it is notable that in his praśasti the triumph over Kāndaļūr Śalai occurs first. More notable is the fact that Rāja Rāja's epigraphs appear at least two years earlier than in Tirunelveli and to the north of it. But the reference in the praśasti need not be in the chronological order; the more notable achievement might have figured at the outset. Secondly, it is doubtful whether the reference to Kāndaļūr Śalai figured signifying a victory. Therefore, the more probable order would have been that the attack and plunder of Madurai appeared first and subsequently the conquest of Nāñchinād including Kāndaļūr and Vilīñam and still later, the attack on the Chēra kingdom followed.

Among Rāja Rāja's inscriptions in south Nāñchinād the earliest one is that of his eighth year in Darśanamkōpe and subsequently that of his tenth year in Śuchindram. A small village Putugramam four k.m. to the north of Śuchindram

was brought under Rāja Rāja Chōla's domain. This is inferred from the new name given to it as 'Raja Nārāyaṇa Chaturvēdimangalam.'<sup>35</sup> It must be remembered that one of the surnames of Rāja Rāja was Chōla Nārāyaṇa.<sup>36</sup> Some guesses made by Nagam Aiya that the change in the name of the village was effected either by a descendant of Nāñchikkurava or by Kulōttunga I are unwarranted.

However, the organisation of Nāñchinād as part of the Chōla empire took place only by the 14th year of Rāja Rāja's rule. This is inferred from the fact that his inscription of the 14th year speaks of Śuchindram as 'Rājarāja Vaḍanāṭṭu Tiruchchivindiram.' Kanyākumari was renamed as Rājarāja chōliśvaram and Kōṭṭar as Mummuḍichōlanallūr. Moreover, Rājarāja, the great lover of temples, added embellishments to the temple at Śuchindram. Perhaps the introduction of the Dēvadāsi system, of the practice of singing the Tiruppadigam devotional hymns and the regularisation of religious ceremonies and festivals in the temple were undertaken by him.

Rājēndra, the son and successor of Rāja Rāja I, strengthened the Chōla hold over Nāñchinād, or the Purattāyanādu portion of Nāñchinād. Some of his inscriptions are found in Śuchindram, Tērūr and Kanyākumari. A Śiva temple was constructed in his time at Chōlapuram about four k.m. north east of Śuchindram and it was surnamed as 'Rājēndrachōliśvaram'.<sup>38</sup> Further, northwest in northern Nāñchinād the authority over Vilīnam was re-established and it was renamed as Rājēndrachōlapatṭinam.<sup>39</sup>

Rājēndra I introduced an innovation by creating the Chōla Pāṇḍya Viceregal system for the effective control of Pāṇdinād and Nāñchinād. It was primarily for keeping the Chōla sway over the refractory Pāṇḍyas that it was introduced.

The designation ‘Chōla Pāṇḍya’ Viceroys indicates that the Chōla sovereign wanted to conciliate the sentiments of the Pāṇḍyas. It is important to remember that the authority of the Chōla Pāṇḍya Viceroys extended over Nāñchinād as well as the portion of Kēraḷa which had been conquered by the Chōlas.

The first of these Chōla Pāṇḍya Viceroys was Jaṭāvarman Sundara Pāṇḍya.<sup>40</sup> There are several epigraphs belonging to his period of Vicereignty. The earliest stone inscription which speaks of the Chōla Pāṇḍya is the one at Mannārkōil belonging to the 24th year of Rājēndra Chōla I<sup>41</sup> and the 15th year of the Governorship of Jaṭāvarman Sundara Pāṇḍya. This indicates that the 24th year of Rājēndra I’s reign was approximately the same as the 15th year of the governorship of Jaṭāvarman Sundara Chōla Pāṇḍya. Since the 24th year of Rājēndra Chōla I fell in A.D. 1036, Sundara Chōla Pāṇḍya’s assumption of the Vicereignty was in A. D. 1020-21.

Sundara’s sway extended not only over the traditional Pāṇḍyan kingdom but farther west in Śuchīndram,<sup>42</sup> Chōlapuram<sup>43</sup> and Tiruvitāṅkōdu.<sup>44</sup> The Śuchīndram inscription is particularly notable because it calls the village as Sundara Chōla Chaturvēdli Maṅgalam. The Tiruvitāṅkōdu inscription shows that his authority extended farther west, almost up to Padmanābhapuram. Probably the contemporary Chōla monarch recognized the supremacy of Sundara Pāṇḍya because the Chēra king built a temple in Pāṇdinādu and called it after the Chōla emperor.<sup>45</sup>

Vikrama Chōla Pāṇḍya was the next Chōla Pāṇḍya Viceroy. Though chronology becomes a difficult problem from now it is probable that Vikrama Chōla Pāṇḍya’s Vicereignty lasted between A.D. 1043 and 1073.

Two inscriptions of Māravarman Uḍaiyār Śrī Vikramē are found at Kanyākumari. Further Ālūr (Āloor), some 10 k.m. west of Nagercoil, was surnamed as Vikramachōla Pāṇḍya-puram. Most probably the place was called so after this Vikramē Chōla Pāṇḍya.

The next and most probably, the third Chōla Pāṇḍya was Jatāvarman, alias Uḍaiyār Sundara Chōla Pāṇḍya. He must have been different from the 'first Viceroy Jaāvaraṁan Sundara Chōla Pāṇḍya. Three inscriptions of his period are found in Šuchindram, the last of which is dated in the 25th year of his rule, thus indicating a long period of viceroyalty.

A fact which suggests that the three inscriptions mentioned above state that Uḍaiyar Śrī Sundara Chōla Pāṇḍya Dēva bestowed gifts or granted remissions of revenue under the orders of his ammān (maternal uncle) show that he was not a formal Chōla Pāṇḍya Viceroy. Perhaps this ruler was identical with the Prince Gaṅgaikonda Chōla appointed as Governor of Pāṇḍinād by Vīra Rājēndra Chōla (A. D. 1063-69). It seems not unlikely that this Uḍaiyār Śrī Sundara Chōla Pāṇḍya was appointed a temporary Governor of Pāṇḍinād by Rājādhirāja I (A.D. 1018-54) before he became the formal emperor. It is known that Rājādhirāja I had become a sub-king as early as A.D. 1018, but he became emperor only in A.D. 1044. After the Viceroyalty of Māravarman Vikramē Chōla Pāṇḍya, Rājādhirāja I might have appointed his nephew as a Governor.

The next Chōla Pāṇḍya Viceroy appears to have been Mummađi Chōla. But his inscriptions are all found in the Tirunelvēli District. Similarly Māravarman Uḍaiyār Śrī Parākrama, probably the last of the Chōla Pāṇḍya's inscriptions are found only in the Tirunelvēli District and not

any where in Nāñchināḍ. It is not known whether he exercised effective authority over the region. Perhaps he was a son of Kulōttunga I and he ruled for four years as Chōla Pāṇḍya Viceroy from c. A.D. 1098 to 1102.

Some writers have thought that the Chōla Pāṇḍya Viceregal system ended with the accession of Kulōttunga I in A.D. 1070. But the only epigraphic clue to this surmise is found in an epigraph of Parāntaka Pāṇḍya in Kanyākumari. It seems that Parāntaka Pāṇḍya asserted his independence but he ruled till about the middle of the 12th century.

It is clear that the Chōla Pāṇḍya Viceroys had a chequered history. They ruled between A.D. 1020-2 and the middle of the 12th century. For some time towards the end of their rule, their authority over Nāñchināḍ and Kēraḷa was feeble. On the whole they had contributed to the maintenance of peace and order for a little over a century.

#### *The rise of Vēṇāḍ :*

As seen earlier, it is likely that the name Vēṇāḍ is derived by a combination of Vēḷ and nāḍ. Vēḷ stood for Āy Vēḷ, as seen from an inscription of Kōccāḍaiyan who became king early in the 9th century A.D. Perhaps the Āys were known as Āy Vēḷs even from an earlier time. Some Travancore historians like T. K. Velu Pillai held that Vēṇāḍ was different and that it became Travancore later. But the Madras Museum Plates speak of the Āy Vēḷ ruler as the Vēṇ Mannan. No doubt the extent of Vēṇāḍ varied from time to time. As seen earlier, the Āys had their seat of power in Shenkōṭṭai near the centre of Travancore. Later they extended their power over the south down to Kanyākumari. Tiruvitāṅkōdu or Tiruvālumkōdu in Nāñchināḍ

was an important seat of their power and the name Tiruvitānkōre is probably derived from it. Padmanābhapuram in its vicinity became the capital of Vēṇāḍ. At times their territory comprised modern Nāñchināḍ on the one hand and Shenkōṭṭai or Āykuḍy on the other. Therefore Vilīnam and Kāndalūr Śālai were included in Vēṇāḍ.

Sometime after the beginning of 10th century A. D. Vēṇāḍ became Tiruvitānkūr though there was a vague reference to Vēṇāḍ as part of the Chēra kingdom. Vēṇāḍ was also called the kingdom of the Kūpkas. There appeared a craze with advance of time for Vēṇāḍ becoming associated with Chērapādu, and Malayalam rather than with Tamil. Now an epoch making event in the history of the Nāñchināḍ was its conquest by the establishment of Vēṇāḍ supremacy over Nāñchināḍ in the first quarter of the 12th century A.D. There are several legends associated on the granite base of the Pāṇḍyan Anai or the dam of the Parali. An inscription

எத்திசையும் புகழ்ப்படைத்த கொல்லம் தோன்றி  
இருநூற்றி தொண்ணுாற்றி ரண்டாமாண்டு  
வெற்றிசெய்யும் கும்பத்தில் விபாழ நின்ற விளங்கு  
தி சுகளாவணி பன் வென்றுங்கேததி  
தத்திவிழும் பறவிசாற்றலை யுந்தள்ளித் தமிழ்  
பாண்டிராஜ சிங்கன்றலையும் வென்று  
கொத்தலரும் பூஞ்சோலை நாஞ்சினூடும் கோட்டாறும்  
சூபகர் கோன் கொண்டவாறே

is believed to state that in 292 M.E. (A. D. 1116) a Kūpaka king conquered Kōṭṭār and the whole of Nāñchināḍ from the Pāṇḍyan king, Rājasimha. From about this time Nāñchināḍ comprised mainly Tōvālai and Agastīśvaram taluks, in the west upto Tiruvitānkōdu. Moreover, Nagam Aiya

states that the Manuscript Records in the Padmanābhāsvāmi temple in Trivandrum refer to this incident although the date of the event entered therein is 282 M.E. which probably is a slip for 292 M.E.<sup>46</sup>

Naturally some doubts have arisen. Firstly, was the Kūpaka king, the accredited victor, identical with Vīrakēraḷa Varma of Vēṇāḍ? Secondly, who was Rājasimha the vanquished Pāṇḍya king? As noticed earlier, Vēṇāḍ kings are often described as belonging to the Kūpaka dynasty. Therefore, Vīra Kēraḷa Varma of Vēṇāḍ may be considered to have been the victor. But it is by no means easy to identify Rājasimha who was defeated. Perhaps he was an insignificant ruler. Or is the entire account of the Vēṇāḍ ruler having vanquished the Pāṇḍya and secured control over Nāñchināḍ a later fabrication?

#### *The Nāñchikkuravan episode :*

In the midst of the account regarding the establishment of the supremacy of the Vēṇāḍ king over Nāñchināḍ there has appeared a traditional episode connected with one Nāñchikkuravan. It is believed that during the rule of the Muslims with Madurai as their headquarters in the south one Konkāṇi Kuravan, an adventurous feudatory of Vēṇāḍ attacked and captured Nāñchināḍ and set up an independent rule over the extreme south. Shankunny Menon, an early historian of Travancore, states that in 292 M.E. (A.D. 1116) Nāñchikkuravan was attacked and expelled from Nāñchināḍ by the Vēṇāḍ ruler.<sup>47</sup> Later historians like Nagam Aiya and T. K. Velu Pillai assume that it was Vīra Kēraḷa who accomplished his triumph over Nāñchināḍ by defeating Nāñchikkuravan, the last member of the line of Konkāṇi Kuravan and capturing the places like Kōṭṭār, Śuchindram and Kanyākumari.

It must be admitted that there is no authentic basis for the account about Kōṅkāṇi Kuṛavan and his successors. Nagam Aiya, believing a tradition current in Nāñchināḍ says that Nāñchikkurāvan had as his minister one Mudaliar who eventually got rid of his suzerain and established a commonwealth of the people. It is difficult to state which of these accounts is historically acceptable. But from the later history of the Periyavīṭṭu Mudaliar of Alagiyapāṇḍipuram which is authenticated by palm leaf records<sup>48</sup> it is probable that a Mudaliar from the Chōla kingdom had migrated from his homeland and established his influence in certain villages of Nāñchināḍ.

Whether the episode of Nāñchikkurāvan was invented by some member of the Mudaliar family it is not known. There is a reference to one Nāñchil Vaṭṭuvan or Porunan in the Śaṅgam classics. It is not improbable that the myth of a later Nāñchikkurāvan and his immediate ancestor Koukāṇi Kuṛavan was invented by some member of the Mudaliar family. Furthermore, there is a chronological incongruity in the traditional story. It is stated that Nāñchikkurāvan's ancestor had established himself during the Muhammadan ruler. But there is no evidence of a Muslim invasion of South India earlier than A.D. 1310. Therefore, the basis of the entire account is open to doubt. However, whether Nāñchikkurāvan's family had established itself in and near Alagiyapāṇḍipuram is believable or not there is no doubt that the Mudaliar chieftain had become the powerful leader of the people in north Nāñchināḍ. It is likely that his power was curbed by the Vēṇāḍ ruler Vīra Kēraḷa who conquered Nāñchināḍ. We find from an inscription in Śuchindram that the place was called Vīra Kēraḷa Chaturvēdimāṅgalam. If a palm-leaf record the copy of which is found in the Vaṭṭappalli Sthanikar's house is trustworthy, as it seems to be, we find that by 305 M.E.

(A.D. 1130) Vīra Kēraḷa's authority had been established at Śuchindram.

*Pāṇḍyan's attacks:*

Vīra Kēraḷa's authority over Nāñchinād was not left unchallenged. While his inscriptions at Tiruvallam dated 319 M.E. (A.D. 1144) shows that he continued to rule Vēṇād on that date, there arises a doubt regarding his control over Nāñchinād. An inscription of one Parāntaka Pāṇḍya in Kanyākumari claims that he defeated the Chēra and Vēṇād rulers and captured Viḍiñam and Kāndalūr Śālai. But the inscription is full of adulation and one doubts its veracity. In Śuchindram and Paravaśsēri there are inscriptions belonging to the Pāṇḍyan king, Māravarman Śrī Vallabha. But unfortunately they are undated. Palaeographically they are assignable to this period. His inscriptions in Kalladakkurichi in the Tirunelvēli District show that he belonged to the line of later Pāṇḍyas and that he was ruling the Pāṇḍyan kingdom about this time.<sup>50</sup>

Perhaps after the time of Vīra Kēraḷa there was an attempt on the part of the Pāṇḍyan power to recover places in Nāñchinād. K. A. N. Sastri has rightly shown that Vīra Ravi Vaṭman, the successor of Vīra Kēraḷa, was defeated by the Pāṇḍyan king, Māravarman Śrī Vallabha, and that he was compelled to acknowledge Pāṇḍyan suzerainty in Nāñchinād.

But the establishment of Māravarman Śrī Vallabha's suzerainty over Nāñchinād is not indubitably proved. An endowment to a temple need not necessarily show the donor's political supremacy over the place. It is notable that the endowment to the Śuchindram temple was made by the king while he was residing at Rājarājachaturvēdimāngalam and that the endowment was made on the request of the member of the

Suchindram Sabha. The Suchindram Sabha itself described Suchindram as their own village: 'Taṅgalūr Śuchindramudaiya mahādēvar kōyili.'

Another incongruity seems to appear in the Suchindram inscription under consideration. The name of the village is recorded as 'Sundarapāṇḍya chaturvēdimāṅgalam'. At first sight this seems to prove Pāṇḍya domination over the place. But Śrī Vallabha is not known to have had the surname of Sundara. Nor did any Pāṇḍyan ruler, bearing that name, figure in Suchindram or Nāñchinād earlier. It is true that Suchindram was described as Sundarachōla Pāṇḍya Chaturvēdi-māṅgalam after the first Chōla Pāṇḍya Viceroy. Is the change of name appearing in Śrī Vallabha's inscription merely the result of a slip on the part of the engraver? Perhaps it is.

#### *Revival of Vēṇād supremacy over Nāñchinād :*

Even if the Pāṇḍyan power was established for a time, it was purely temporary. There appears in 320 M.E. (A.D. 1145) an inscription of Kōda Kēraļavarman in Suchindram itself. This confirms that in Vira Kēraļa's time or soon after the supremacy of Vēṇād over south Nāñchinād was established.

Kōda-Kēraļavarman's successor was Śrī Vira Ravi Varma who subdued the eastern part of Nāñchinād. This fact is learnt from his inscription of 336 M.E. (A.D. 1161) which shows that he bestowed a gift of lands in Tālakkudy to the Puravaśśeri (Paravaraśu) temple.<sup>51</sup> This inscription reveals the interesting fact that the affairs of Nāñchinād were administered by a triumvirate of royal officers. Apparently there was trouble in the region and this arrangement seems to have been similar to that of Chōla Pāṇḍya Viceregal system. Further this inscription throws light on the village

organizations in Nāñchinād. It is learnt from this epigraph that the people of Tālakkūdy had the right to ratify the royal grants and enforce them. What is known about Tālakkudy must have been true of other places in the Nāñchinād. It is remarkable indeed that the king recognized and utilised the popular institutions in the administration of the land.

*Popular institutions :*

During the 12th and 13th centuries and still later, too, in Nāñchinād as well as in the rest of Vēṇād, the local assemblies and temple sabhas were virile institutions. They managed the day-to-day affairs. Several inscriptions of Vēṇād, beyond the limits of Nāñchinād, indicate that the local affairs were under the control of the assemblies. But Sundaram Pillai, and following him, others have overrated the importance of a body known as that of the "Six Hundred" which was entrusted with the supervision of temples. Secondly, except in brahmadēyas, the affairs of the temple were not only the concerns of villages. In fact we have no full data concerning the other functions of the 'Six Hundred.' Therefore, to make a general statement about the prevalence of popular government in all the villages is unwarranted.

*Udayamārtāṇḍavarma :*

The next important Vēṇād ruler appears to have been Udaya Mārtāṇḍa. He had connection with the Pāṇḍyan royal family. His daughter Tribhuvana Dēvi became the queen of the Pāṇḍyan king Māravarman Śrī Vallabha. There has been some doubt as to the date of Udayamārtāṇḍavarma's accession on account of the illegibility of his Tiruvattār inscription. Sundaram Pillai's reading of the

year as 348 M.E. was questioned by Gopinatha Rao, who took it as 398 M.E.<sup>51</sup> But the present view has veered round to that of Sundaram Pillai's reading. This is reinforced by the fact that an inscription of Udayamārtāṇḍavarṣma's successor Ādityavarṣma, belonging to 368 M.E., has been discovered.

The 13th and 14th centuries A.D. witnessed the rule of able Vēṇāḍ monarchs succeeding one another. One peculiar feature which incidentally presents serious difficulties to the historian is the system of co-partnership or the practice of junior members of the royal family being associated with the ruling sovereign. Since, in addition to this fact, the names of three different families to which the rulers belonged are mentioned, the position in several cases becomes distressingly complex. Nagam Aiya shows how two or more kings of the same dynasty are mentioned as ruling at the same time. Perhaps some of them were independent chiefs ruling over small tracts. Or it may be that the senior associated the junior with him in Governmental affairs.

Early in the 14th century A.D. the famous conqueror, Ravivarṣman Kulaśēkhara, who was ruling at Quilon, undertook a bold campaign in the region of the Coromandel coast. He must have passed through Nāñchināḍ and the Āralvāymoli Pass. He was born in A.D. 1266 and it is believed on the basis of his Kāñchipuram inscription that he ascended the throne only in his 33rd year. In fact he had become king of Vēṇāḍ much earlier. Since in the meanwhile Vikramā Pāṇḍya had attacked and conquered the whole of Vēṇāḍ, Ravi Varṣma first defeated him and married a Pāṇḍya princess, obviously the daughter of Vikramā Pāṇḍya. Ravi Varṣma then increased his strength and subjugated the whole of Kēraḷa before his thirty-third year of age. Then he undertook his famous campaign of the region of the

Coromandel coast. The history of his campaign is irrelevant to the history of Nāñchinād.

Nāñchinād continued to be under the sway of the Vēṇāḍ kings. The discovery of inscriptions in Śuchindram and Chōlapuram of one Parākrama Pāṇḍya, however, has led Nagam Aiya to put forward a strange theory.<sup>52</sup> He holds that Parākrama Pāṇḍya, whose reign commenced about A.D. 1357, had secured possession of Nāñchinād and ruled over it. The Chōlapuram inscription states that the temple of Rājendra Chōlēśvaram was reconstructed by Parākrama in the 15th year of his reign.<sup>53</sup> The Śuchindram epigraph shows that Jatāvaraṇa Parākrama Pāṇḍya instituted in the 28th year of his reign the ‘Parākrama Pāṇḍya Sandhi Pūja’ for which he settled lands in Cheṅgalakkurichchi (in the present Tirunelveli District). These data are enough for Nagam Aiya to suggest that Parākrama Pāṇḍya maintained sway over Nāñchinād from 1372 to 1385 A.D. For one thing, the astronomical details found in the Śuchindram inscription do not tally with the known facts of the 14th century Parākrama Pāṇḍya. T. A. Gopinatha Rao has proved<sup>54</sup> that the inscription really belongs to the 15th century Parākrama, the builder of the Viśvanāthaśvāmy temple at Teṅkāsi. Secondly, the Chōlapuram inscription by itself does not prove the political supremacy of the Pāṇḍya. It records nothing more than that the temple of Rājendra Chōlēśvaram was reconstructed by Parākrama Pāṇḍya.<sup>55</sup> Note-worthy is the fact that the epigraph is not dated in terms of his reign. Moreover, it must be repeated that benefactions to temples were above dynastic disputes and belligerent enterprises.

Having hazarded that Parākrama Pāṇḍya conquered and ruled Nāñchinād for 13 years, Nagam Aiya makes Śrī Vira Rāma Varma, the Vēṇāḍ king reigning in A. D. 1313, the

recoverer of the country. Neither the first conquest nor the re-conquest is unquestionably proved. It is a fact that the chronicles of the Padmanābhasvāmy temple mention that Ravi Varma made certain gifts to the temple in 302 M. E. (A.D. 1416) as an atonement for the havoc caused in the war at Karuvēlaṅkulam. But this war was probably an aggressive exploit on the part of the Vēṇāḍ ruler. With the enfeebled position of the Pāṇḍya, instead of Nāñchināḍ, the region to the east of Āralvāimoli happened to be the bone of contention. In fact, for several succeeding centuries Vēṇāḍ kings held sway over Valliyūr and Nāṅgunēri.

In the latter half of the 14th century the Pāṇḍyas lost their hold on the Madurai country and found their authority restricted to the extreme south. No doubt, some of the later Pāṇḍyas occasionally patronized temples in Nāñchināḍ. An inscription of Māravarman Vīra Pāṇḍya, and another Arikēsari Parākrama appear in the Śuchindram temple. But, though dated in their respective regnal years, these records of pious endowments cannot be taken as indications of their political supremacy over the place.

We hear of Vēṇāḍ kings continuing to exercise their sway over Nāñchināḍ. Occasionally they had to acknowledge the supremacy of the Chēra sovereign. It became a craze with some of the Vēṇāḍ kings to add the name Chēra to their own names. One such was Chēra Udayamārtāṇḍavarma (A.D. 1383–1444). As Shangunny Menon states, his reign was the longest in the history of Vēṇāḍ. But Nagam Aiya interposes the names of other rulers in the account of Chēra Udaya Mārtāṇḍa Varma. As shown by T. K. Velu Pillai, Nagam Aiya's account cannot be taken as correct<sup>56</sup> because Chēra Udayamārtāṇḍavarma himself adopted several names.

On the basis of an inscription of 643 M. E. (1468 A. D.) in the temple of Kariyamāṇikkapuram Viṇṭavar Emperumān,

in Idalakkudi near Kōṭṭār, it is held that about the same time Kulaśēkhara Nampirāṭṭiyār, the Kūpaka Queen reconstructed the temple of Kariyamāṇikka Vinnavar Emperumān. T. K. Velu Pillai casts a doubt on this view. The names of Kulaśēkhara and Nampirāṭṭiyār might have been the basis of the identification. The doubt cast by T. K. Velu Pillai is rather far-fetched. The names very likely have a Malayalam touch about them.

From the latter part of the 15th century A.D. the Tirunelveli region became an important centre of the power of the rulers of Vēṇāḍ. Some of the Vēṇāḍ kings were often in Tirunelveli. For example, a Vēṇāḍ king staying at Tirunelveli issued an inscription that a certain place in Quilon should be called Chempakarāmanteruvu and Añchinānpukalidām. This shows that Tirunelveli was a portion of Travancore. The inscription belongs to Ādityavarman who was reigning over Vēṇāḍ between A.D. 1469 and 1484.

Āditya Varma was succeeded by Ravi Varma in A.D. 1484. He had to meet with the opposition of the Yōgakkār, the temple trustees, of Śrī Padmanābhasvāmy temple. He was stern in his dealings with them and he succeeded in suppressing their overgrown power. But a devotee of tradition, he made a gift of twelve silver pots and certain lands to the temple, in expiation of his stern measures against the Yōgakkār which had led to skirmishes. Ravi Varma was obliged to take military action at Chiṭayinkil against the insurgent activities of Dēśīnganāḍ.

Reference has been made earlier to the system of co-regency in Vēṇāḍ. It is now found that Jayasimha Dēva II and Śakala Kalā Mārtāṇḍavarma were co-regents about the time of the formal king Ravi Varma. These two co-regents played an important part in the history of Nāñchināḍ. Nagam Aiya gives on the basis of inscriptions

the following account about them.<sup>57</sup> Jayasimha Dēva II reigned in Vēṇāḍ in the year 661 M. E. (A.D. 1486). His successor was Sakala Kalā Märtāṇḍa Varma who is known to have ruled about 670 M. E. (A.D. 1495). The latter established a temple of Vināyaka at the village of Maruṇkūr in Agastiśvaram taluk after his own name. Of Jayasimha II we gather the following information from the pillar inscriptions of Paraśurāma Perunteru in Kōṭṭar. On the 1st Chittirai 661 M. E. (A.D. 1486) the crowned king of the Chēra family by name Jayasimha Dēvar came on tour to Vadaśśeri in South Travancore. The Brāhmaṇins, the Pillamārs and other superior sections of the community looked down upon the inhabitants of Paraśurāma Perunteru who earned their bread by dyeing clothes and who had come from distant lands and colonised the said Perunteru. Moreover, they kept them aloof saying that they were of low origin and that they belonged to the left hand caste of the community. They were subjected to further hardships by being prevented from paying their respects to the king except through themselves, and that they should not worship the village gods as the high class people did, that they should readily submit to pay any kind of tax levied upon them and that, if any of these rules were infringed, they would be subjected to corporal punishment and forbidden from living even in their own village or from using the village wells. The poor people took advantage of the royal presence in their midst and prayed for the redress of their grievances. The king Jayasimha Dēva was pleased to grant them audience and after hearing them issued orders to the following effect.

1. That if they had any grievance to be redressed they might appear before the king and acquaint him of the same whenever he came in procession on his elephant;

2. that they need pay no other tax than that for the maintenance of the navy viz. *Kappalvari* and that of the *Padaippanam* (army);
3. That the superior classes (including right hand castes) should not interfere with their religious worship, with the celebration of their festivals nor with the use of the necessary flags and other appendages within certain limits exclusively set apart for their use;
4. that no injustice should be done to them;
5. that they should be allowed free use of the public wells and tanks;
6. and that any interference on the part of the Brāhmīns, Pillamārs and other superior sections of the community with the affairs of the left hand caste, would meet with royal displeasure and be punished accordingly.

It need hardly be emphasized that these were important social reforms ahead of the times. T. K. Velu Pillai questions the date assigned to Jayasimha Dēva by Nagam Aiya on the ground that the king is mentioned as the senior Tiruvaḍi and Chēramān Kiriṭapati. This is not an acceptable criticism because the kings of those times adopted different designations. There is no doubt that Jayasimha Dēva II was a co-regent of the time of Ravi Ravi Varma.

Now, regarding Sakalakalā Mārtāṇḍavarṇa who appears to have been another co-regent of about A.D. 1537, he is stated to have redressed certain grievances of the Nādārs in the villages between Paraḷi and Tōvāḷai mountains. This was also a piece of desirable social reform.

In spite of the occasional interest shown by the Vēṇāḍ rulers, the affairs of Nāñchināḍ did not receive constant and steady attention at their hands. One general feature noticed in the history of Nāñchināḍ from about the 13th century onwards is that the rulers of Vēṇāḍ were not able to devote much attention to the affairs of Nāñchināḍ. Their hands were full with problems nearer home. Consequently they had little time or bent of mind to look after the affairs of Nāñchināḍ. Moreover, beginning from the 13th century A.D. Vēṇāḍ had become Malayalam-oriented. Malayalam language and culture, though heavily indebted to Tamil, were zealously patronized by the Vēṇāḍ kings and chieftains. Nāñchināḍ felt the impact of Malayalam, which, however, could not uproot Tamil in Nāñchināḍ. In fact there are still many Tamils even in and north of Trivandrum. They are considerably influenced by Malayalam. But the basic outlook of the Nāñchināḍians was one factor which contributed to the indifference if not hostility of the Vēṇāḍ rulers to Nāñchināḍ.

#### *Nāñchināḍ and Vijayanagar :*

The reign of Ravi Ravi Varma witnessed the incursion of the Vijayanagar forces into Nāñchināḍ. It amounted to a challenge of the supremacy of the Vēṇāḍ ruler. In dealing with this aspect of history of South India some Travancore historians, particularly T. K. Velu Pillai, influenced by parochialism and jingoism, have tried to pervert historical facts. This is seen prominently in respect of the contact of Vijayanagar with Vēṇāḍ.

The conflict of Vijayanagar with Vēṇāḍ arose during the reign of Bhūtala Śrī Vira Udayamārtāndavarma (A.D. 1516-35). The circumstances which led to the attack of Vēṇāḍ by Vijayanagar began in the reign of Krishṇa Dēva

Rāya. The Pāṇḍyan kings who had already become a vassal of Vijayanagar, was frequently harassed by the aggressive Vēṇāḍ ruler. Now he sought the help of Krishṇa Dēva Rāya, the Vijayanagar Emperor. The Vēṇāḍ ruler caused further provocation to Krishṇa Dēva Rāya by his giving protection to the rebel chief of Chōla Rājya, who had defied the Vijayanagar supremacy. Therefore, in the midst of other preoccupations, Krishṇa Dēva Rāya resolved to send an expedition to Vēṇāḍ in order to punish the ruler. But before the Vijayanagar army could start Krishṇa Dēva Rāya died. However, the idea of undertaking the revenge against Vēṇāḍ was zealously undertaken by Achyuta Rāya, the successor of Krishṇa Dēva Rāya. In fact Achyuta Rāya himself decided to lead the army. After the army reached Śrīraṅgam Achyuta Rāya sent his brother-in-law Sāluva Timma to proceed with the army to Vēṇāḍ. The Vēṇāḍ forces marched to encounter the invading host and a battle took place on the banks of Tāmraparṇi. Regarding the result of this battle there has appeared a difference of views. The '*Achyutarāyābhuyudayam*' as well as the inscriptions of Achyuta declare that the Vijayanagar forces defeated the Vēṇāḍ ruler and planted a pillar of victory on the bank of the Tāmraparṇi river.<sup>57</sup> It is added that the vanquished ruler gave Sāluva Timma presents of elephants and horses. These were accepted by the Vijayanagar general on behalf of his sovereign, and then accompanied by the Vēṇāḍ ruler, proceeded on a pilgrimage to Trivandrum where he worshipped Padmanābhasvāmy the patron deity of Vēṇāḍ. From there, Sāluva Timma accompanied by the Vēṇāḍ king undertook a pilgrimage to Rāmēśvaram and thence to Śrīraṅgam, where the vanquished monarch was presented to the Vijayanagar Emperor. Achyuta Rāya ordered his minister to punish the Vēṇāḍ ruler for having encroached upon the Pāṇḍyan dominion and he permitted the Pāṇḍya to rule over his ancestral territories.<sup>58</sup>

Now T. K. Velu Pillai feels it incumbent upon him to challenge these statements. He contends that both the literary and epigraphic data are partial and untrustworthy. He adds that the inscriptions which glorify the victory are found in Kāñchi and other places, far away from Vēṇāḍ and that the literary source is undependable because it is given to exaggeration.<sup>59</sup> While the '*Achyutarāyābhodayam*' is no doubt a laudatory poem, it could not have transformed a defeat into a victory. As regards the inscriptions, their location does not invalidate their trustworthiness.

In confirmation of the Vijayanagar victory attention may be drawn to the copper plate of the reign of Muttu Krishṇappa. The Plate belonging to A.D. 1537 records a gift of the village of Puliyūrkuṛichchi a few k.ms. to the west of present Nāñchināḍ, by the son of Aṇṇan Basavaṇṇa Nāyakar, who was an officer of Viṭṭhala Maharāja, the Vijayanagar emperor. This indicates that the Vēṇāḍ ruler had recognised the supremacy of Vijayanagar. Moreover, an inscription at Elavanasūr of A.D. 1532 includes among the birudas of Achyuta, the title of 'Tiruvadisaptāṅgaharāṇa'<sup>60</sup> which describes him as he who captured the seven emblems of Tiruvadi's (Vēṇāḍ ruler's) royalty. These pieces of evidence leave us in no doubt regarding the victory of Vijayanagar over the king of Vēṇāḍ. Nāñchināḍ also inevitably had to acknowledge the supremacy of Vijayanagar. The fact that the Vēṇāḍ ruler, Bhūṭala Vīra Udayamārtāṇḍavarma made endowments to the temple at Kanyākumari in A.D. 1541 and to the temple at Pallakkal<sup>61</sup> (does not prove the victory of Vijayanagar). Endowments to temples were made irrespective of the political events.

#### *The Second Vijayanagar invasion:*

This time the conflict of the Vijayanagar force with those of Vēṇāḍ occurred within the confines of Nāñchināḍ.

The causes which led to this attack were the failure on the part of the Vēṇāḍ ruler to pay the tribute to Vijayanagar and his frequent attacks on the Pāṇḍya ruler. Moreover, the Paravas of Kōṭṭār had been converted to Christianity by the Portuguese and consequently the Paravas were loyal to the Portuguese and hostile to Vijayanagar. This expedition was led by Rāmarāya Viṭṭhala, the Vijayanagar Viceroy at Madurai and his brother Chinna Timma. Coming through the Āralvāimoli Pass, the invaders encountered the Vēṇāḍ forces at Kōṭṭār. Then there appears the story of Xavier appearing before the advancing army with the crucifix in hand striking terror into their hands.<sup>62</sup> But it must be mentioned that none of the sources speaks of a pitched battle or victory won by Uṇṇi Kēraḷa the ruler of Vēṇāḍ at the time. It is true that Uṇṇi Kēraḷa ever since held Father Xavier in great esteem, which indicates that Xavier had played an important part in the peaceful settlement of the conflict.

But T. K. Velu Pillai asserts that the Vijayanagar army was defeated for the second time by the Vēṇāḍ ruler. This is unbalanced patriotism and not history. He makes a categorical statement that “the Vijayanagar army was ignominiously defeated at Kōṭṭār in A.D. 1544.” No positive evidence for this statement is provided by him. On the other hand, it is difficult to accept his assertion in the face of the two inscriptions at Śuchīndram. The first inscription belonging to A.D. 1545 records that Viṭṭhala built the *Gopura* of the temple for Tiruvēṅkatanātha and erected the Dhvajastambha in front of the Perumāl shrine. The second inscription of A.D. 1547 registers a gift of lands settled by the then ruling king of Vēṇāḍ, Venrumāṇkonda Bhūtala Vīra Rāma Varma for offerings to Tiruvēṅkada Emperumān on the birthdays of Viṭṭhala. T. K. Velu Pillai hastens to explain that the endowment of the Vēṇāḍ king was instituted as a token of gratitude

for Viṭṭhala's construction of the *Gopura*. This seems more ingenious than convincing. For one thing, if Viṭṭhala and his army had been defeated and "driven away" as has been claimed, obviously it is incongruous to hold that he came to Śuchindram and undertook the stupendous work of constructing the *Gopura*. Moreover, an endowment of the triumphant monarch in honour of the vanquished foe would reverse the national order of expectation. The description of Viṭṭhala as 'Pāṇḍyarājyasthāpanāchārya' and the absence of a similar reference in relation to the Vēṇāḍ ruler are employed by T. K. Velu Pillai to urge that the Vēṇāḍ ruler's position was not in any way affected. But it must be observed that, it was as a champion of the Pāṇḍya against the Vēṇāḍ king's aggressions that it was for the reinstatement of the Pāṇḍya in his dominions, that the Vijayanagar expeditions were primarily undertaken. Hence, far from proving Mr. Pillai's thesis, the reference to Viṭṭhala as 'Pāṇḍyasthāpanāchārya' has the contrary effect.

Moreover, the Tirupati Devasthānam Inscription<sup>63</sup> records the grant of a village near Tāmraparṇi by the Vēṇāḍ king for the performance of certain ceremonies as invocations for the prosperity of Viṭṭhala. Another inscription<sup>64</sup> states definitely that Visvanātha obtained from Rāmarājarāyan the land of the Vēṇāḍ ruler as amaranāyakam. It adds that Visvanātha's son Krishṇappa Nāyaka granted seven villages in this Province to the God of Krishṇapuram temple, which was constructed by him. This shows beyond doubt the subordinate position of the Vēṇāḍ king in relation to Vijayanagar. The epigraphic testimony is further corroborated by literary sources like the '*Rāmarājyam*' and the '*Yādayābhuyadayavyākhya*', all of which sing the glory of Viṭṭhala's victory over the Vēṇāḍ king.<sup>65</sup>

On the whole, it is clear that attempts to question the establishment of Vijayanagar supremacy are not convincing.

In fact, as mentioned earlier, it seems that the Vēṇāḍ king concluded a peace with Viṭṭhala through the mediation of Xavier, recognizing the supremacy of Vijayanagar. The exact terms of the peace are not known. There are no means of ascertaining the question whether or not the annual payment of tribute was imposed as a condition; perhaps it was imposed so, if we are to believe the grounds put forward by the Nāyaks of Madurai for their own invasion of the land.

*The last expedition :*

In A. D. 1558 Viṭṭhala again attacked Vēṇāḍ. Probably remissness in the payment of tribute was the cause. However, this attempt proved disastrous for Viṭṭhala.<sup>66</sup> There is the account given by Fr. Perez, the Portuguese Missionary, who had been sent to Viṭṭhala on behalf of the Vēṇāḍ king. Fr. Perez presented to the troops a standard with the name of Jesus painted on it. The banner was carried by the Vēṇāḍ army and at the hour of battle, according to instructions, the soldiers invoked the name of Jesus in a chorus. It is said that, on hearing the roaring voices the bewildered Telugu army retreated pell-mell, and was pursued by the Vēṇāḍ forces. Evidently, the battle ended in the defeat of Viṭṭhala, and there is no evidence to warrant the denial of the courage and confidence which had been instilled into the Vēṇāḍ army by the priest. Perhaps Viṭṭhala himself was either killed in the battle or in the turmoil that followed it; however, we do not hear of him any further. It is needless to add that the defeat of Viṭṭhala redeemed the independence of Vēṇāḍ from allegiance to Vijayanagar.

*Nāñchināḍ and the Nāyaks of Madurai :*

After the Vijayanagar contact with Nāñchināḍ, there came the turn of the Nāyaks of Madurai. The 17th century in fact

was a period of trial and tribulation of severe suffering and agony for the inhabitants of Nāñchināḍ. In fact, unlike the Vijayanagar invasions the Nāyak attacks affected several villages of Nāñchināḍ. The people had to bear the brunt of the attacks. Often pillage and plunder followed. It appeared as though there was a recrudescence of incursions similar to those of the early Pāṇḍyas and Chōḷas. Nāñchināḍ became the cockpit of Vēṇāḍ.

After A.D. 1542, the last year of Achyutarāya's rule, the Nāyak chiefs gradually established their virtual independence, owing nothing but a formal allegiance to Vijayanagar. In 1553 Visvanātha Nāyak, the founder of the dynasty, subjugated the Pāṇḍya and reduced him to the position of an insignificant vassal ruling in and around Tirunelveli. Naturally, their domination over the Pāṇḍya was a prelude to their intrusion into Nāñchināḍ. Satyanathaier in his book 'History of the Nāyaks'<sup>67</sup> states that Travancore appears to have remained loyal to the Nāyaks since Viṭṭhala's time but this is rather inaccurate. In fact it is only from the beginning of the 17th century that the Nāyak contact with Nāñchināḍ commenced. Doubtless, Kanyākumari was captured by the Nāyaks in or before A.D. 1609, as is clear from Fr. A. Laerzio's letter of November 20th 1969, which describes the Paravas of Kumari as tributaries of the Madurai Nāyak.<sup>68</sup> But Kanyākumari then lay in Purattāyanādu, beyond the confines of Nāñchināḍ.

#### *Tirumala Nāyak's invasion :*

The regular invasion of Nāñchināḍ was first undertaken by Tirumala Nāyak in A.D. 1634. The exact cause of this invasion is not known; in all probability, it was an act of wanton aggression. That the Nāyaks, as the heirs of the Vijayanagar Empire, were authorised to collect tribute from Vēṇāḍ, was probably employed as a pretext.

Besides semi-historical works of the period, the 'Mudaliār Manuscripts' recovered a few years ago from the heir of the Periyavīṭṭu Mudaliār of Alagiyapāṇḍipuram, throw a flood of light on the Nāyak invasions and the consequent suffering of the people. T. K. Velu Pillai is not inclined to attach much importance to these documents, which, he rather insinuatingly says, were discovered only in a private house. But there was no purpose in the Periya Vīṭṭu Mudaliār or his successors in fabricating these accounts. The unpublished Mudaliār Manuscripts show clearly that they contain the accounts of royal communications and more important, the resolutions passed by the people of Nāñchinād under the headship of the eldest member of the Periyavīṭṭu Mudaliār. There is no doubt that the Vēṇāḍ rulers and the later Travancore kings were inclined to be oppressive. Though the exact date of the rise of Periyavīṭṭu Mudaliār is not ascertainable, it is clear that the beginning of the history of Periyavīṭṭu Mudaliār is traceable to M.E. 667 (A.D. 1472) because the earliest of the Manuscripts so far available belongs to that date. How long ago the Periyavīṭṭu Mudaliār had risen to power it is not possible to hazard a guess.

However, the Mudaliār and the assemblies of Nāñchinād came to great prominence in connection with the invasion of the Nāyaks. Among the 'Mudaliār Manuscripts' there is found the copy of an edict issued by the then king of Vēṇāḍ remitting taxes on lands which had to be left uncultivated on account of the Nāyak depredation. This document enables us to determine the date of Tirumala's invasion. The edict is dated 22nd Kumbham M. E. 810 (A.D. 1625). That the havoc caused was appalling is clearly proved by this edict itself and by several other references in the 'Mudaliār Manuscripts.'

The Vēṇāḍ ruler was not able to afford protection to the people of Nāñchināḍ. But T. K. Velu Pillai, the advocate-turned historian, is at great pains to show that the king of Vēṇāḍ was not defeated by Tirumala Nayak; it is doubtful whether he proves his contention. However, it must be added in passing that Satyanathaier's statement that Tirumala's gift of land to the Ālaḍiyūr Śiva Temple in the year A.D. 1636 may have been made in commemoration of his victory,<sup>69</sup> seems unwarranted. As has been repeatedly shown, an endowment to a temple, and that, to one situated outside the place of belligerent operations, may signify a defeat as much as a victory, or neither. Quite different in character and positive in its value is the piece of evidence furnished by the *Rāmappayyan Ammānai*, a ballad, which, though revelling in romantic imagery, is not devoid of historical value. It records not merely a conquest of the 'Malayalam country' by the ruler of Madurai, but it specifically states that the 'Nāñchināḍ Rāja,' the foremost among the Nayak vassals, was appointed to guard the forts of the Pāṇḍya capital. Further, it adds that the king of Nāñchināḍ cooperated with Tirumala Nayak in his war against the Sētupati. Exaggeration of adulation may take the shape of an over-estimation of the tributes or the grandeur of the victory, but not of the fabrication that the Rāja fought as a vassal of Tirumala Nayak against the Sētupati. Nor can T. K. Velu Pillai by any means cast a doubt, as he has done on the identity of the 'Nāñchināḍ Rāja' who was none other than the ruler of Vēṇāḍ. It had been usual with the people to the east of Ārlvāimoḷi to describe the region to their west, either as Nāñchināḍ or as 'Malayalam.' Among the people of Madurai and Tirunelveli Districts, the Vēṇāḍ king is commonly spoken of as the 'Malayāṭattu Rāja.'

Moreover, the '*Iravikkutippillaiappāṭṭu*,' a ballad of South Travancore, adverted to by T. K. Velu Pillai in support of his contention, does not declare that it was a victory for the Vēṇāḍ ruler. The ballad describes how, in the battle of Kan̄iyākuṭam, about 10 k.m. west of Nagercoil, Iravikkuṭṭi Pillai, the famous commander was killed valiantly fighting. Apparently, as has happened in several well-known battles, the death of the commander spelt the doom of the fighting force. Moreover, the ballad itself is not an unimpeachable source of history, and when, on top of all, T. K. Velu Pillai states that 'the ballad, taken along with a prevalent tradition, proves Travancore's victory' the weakness of his conclusion is obvious.

Fr. Peter Martin in his letter says :<sup>68</sup> "Otherwise, it will be impossible for the king of Travancore to make head against so great a number of enemies, whom, he *never overcame but once* and that by their imprudence." The latter triumph, which occurred in A.D. 1697 is definitely known to have been the result of the strategem of Ravi-varman, the king of Vēṇāḍ. This categorical statement of Fr. Martin could not have appeared, if Tirumala Nayak had been defeated earlier.

When all is said, the real question at issue is not who secured the formal victory. Absolutely undeniable is the fact that "although the Madura forces repeated their incursions into Nāñchināḍ and committed depredations, they were not able to win any victory over Travancore."<sup>69</sup> Since it is admitted that the recurrence of the harrowing cruelty and devastating plunder by the invading hosts could not be prevented, the inference is not clear. That Vēṇāḍ was not defeated in any battle is an article of faith with this author of the State Manual.

Tirumala's visit to Śuchīndram is commemorated by some embellishments to the temple. The Garudālvār shrine was constructed under his patronage. The endowment of a golden *aṅgi* or mask for the image of Tekkēḍam Perumāl (Vishṇu) and the construction of broad streets in Śuchīndram are all products of his munificence. Though some old palm-leaf records refer to Tirumala's endowments and changes in Śuchīndram, they are not traceable. A petition submitted by the Tekkumaṇi Maṭham Pōṛgi to the Government in A.D. 1942, makes an incidental reference to Tirumala's benefactions. Moreover, the portrait statue in the Garudālvār shrine is now known to be that of Tirumala Nāyak, and this constitutes an additional proof of his association with the Śuchīndram temple.

Following Tirumala's invasion there occurred incessant Nāyak incursions into Nāñchinād. Inscriptions as well as the 'Mudaliār Manuscripts' furnish a vivid picture of these harrowing details. The Vadaśśēry inscription of 873 M. E. (A.D. 1698) testifies to the raids having been frequent during the period extending from 852 to 871 M. E. (A. D. 1677 to 1696). A palm-leaf record of 898 M. E. (A.D. 1723) reveals how some years earlier, the king camping in Bhūtappāṇdi, issued a decree granting relief to the cultivators of the lands belonging to the village temple.<sup>70</sup>

It is interesting to learn that the king Unnikēraḷavarma, who succeeded Ravivarman in A.D. 1718, claims to have expelled the plundering hordes and beseeched the people of Nāñchinād to return to their homes and resume cultivation. Evidently, many people had deserted their lands and fled to places of refuge.

#### *Invasion of Maṅgammāl :*

Another formidable invasion, probably one similar to that of Tirumala Nāyak occurred about A. D. 1697, during

the reign of Maṅgammāl, the Queen Regent at Madurai. The circumstances which led to this invasion are narrated in Taylor's collection of Manuscripts<sup>71</sup> and in Nelson's 'Madura Manual'.<sup>72</sup> In substance, they are confirmed by the accounts of Jesuits like Bertrand and Fr. Peter Martin.<sup>73</sup> What happened was that, Ravivarman had entered into a secret treaty with the Badagas in order to obtain their help against the turbulent feudal barons, the Ettuvīṭṭil Pillamār. Accordingly, the latter were either killed or expelled by the ruthless Badaga accomplices. But, suddenly Ravivarman mustered his army, attacked the unprepared Badagas and hacked their host to pieces. It was as a measure of retaliation, that Maṅgammāl despatched a punitive force under Daļavāy Narasappayya. Taylor adds that after a strenuous struggle, the Daļavāy emerged triumphant and the terms of peace were settled.

As usual, T. K. Velu Pillai tries to maintain the glory of Vēṇāḍ even against Maṅgammāl's force. He denies the very fact of invasion by Narasappayya. His main argument is as follows. Taylor has mentioned that, among the trophies which Narasappayya had carried away after the war, there were some pieces of ordnance and that they were preserved in the forts of Madurai and Tiruchchirappalli. But Nelson says that he could not find these guns there even after a thorough research. T. K. Velu Pillai makes capital out of this negative circumstance. But it must be urged that Nelson visited these places about A. D. 1868, more than 150 years after Narasappayya's expedition, and we have no authentic or detailed record as to all that had happened in these forts during this long period.

On the other hand, we have positive evidence furnished by the inscription engraved on a stone near a well in

Vadaśśeri; it contains the name of Maṅgammā]. Significant is the fact that the well itself is locally known as the 'Maṅgammāl-dharma-kkiṇaṭu.'<sup>74</sup> The fact that the record is hopelessly mis-spelt and that the engraving has been executed clumsily cannot be bolstered up, as is done by T. K. Velu Pillai, to deny the historical value of the inscription. Thus the alleged reasons for disbelieving Narasappayya's invasion do not appear to be convincing.

*Vindication of popular rights :*

The people of Nāñchināḍ did not take the trials and tribulations caused by the Nayak invasions and the pillage and plunder which followed them. The 'Mudaliār Manuscripts' furnish a vivid picture of the distress suffered by Nāñchināḍ from about the middle of the 17th to the middle of the 18th century as a consequence the repeated invasions and raids of the Nayaks. These records furnish vivid details regarding (a) the actual invasions on several occasions, (b) the havoc caused by their plunder and the damage done to crops and property (the resolutions passed at Isāntimaṅgalam reveal how Śuchīndram and Āśrāmam were attacked and houses there were set on fire), (c) the overbearing behaviour and the cruel tyranny of the Government officials of Vēṇāḍ who tried to fish in troubled waters (d) the attempts made by the ruler to alleviate the sufferings of the people of Nāñchināḍ and above all (e) the numerous resolutions (opporavu moli māṛā ölaikal) passed by the Nāṭṭār, (the people) of Nāñchināḍ, in order to resist the rapacity of officials and to organize measures of relief. Undoubtedly, the resolutions constitute the most interesting part of the records. They reveal the acute political consciousness and the corporate spirit which had developed among the people. The opinion of the majority was declared binding upon every individual.

As a specimen of the resolutions those passed by the assembly which met at Āśrāmam in 889 M. E. (A.D. 1714) may be noticed. "In thus asserting our rights if any piḍāgai or village or and single individual is subjected to loss by acts of government, we should support them by reimbursing such loss from the common funds. If, at any time, any one should get into the secret of government and impair the privileges or rights of the country, he should be subjected to a public enquiry by the Nāṭṭārs."<sup>75</sup>

Similar resolutions were passed as Kadukkarai, Vadasseri and other places. At times the people resolved even to migrate to the east of Āralvāymoli if the authorities continued their attitude of callous indifference. During this period or earlier such threats of non-cooperation and of emigration were not common weapons in other parts of India; they seem to savour of quite modern ideas. Nor did these resolutions remain verbal declarations and pious decisions only. They were often carried out, and the government was consequently compelled to redress their grievances.

The raids of the Nāyaks continued till A.D. 1725 as far as our knowledge goes. A royal command of the year 889 M. E. (A.D. 1714) records a raid of the Nāyaks on Valukkumpāṛai to the east of Śuchindram and adds that, in the course of their depredations, they violated the sanctity of several temples in the region. Yet another royal communication, which belongs to about A.D. 1725 states that one Alagappa Mudali came at the head of Nāyak troops and cavalry and lay encamped at Valukkampāṛai. One of the 'Mudaliār Manuscripts' furnishes evidence of the fact that the date of Alagappa Mudali's attack of Nāñchinād ranged sometime between 22nd Tai and 25th Vaikāśi

of 900 M. E. (A.D. 1725). Besides, it is believed that a huge vessel of bronze belonging to the temple at Śuchindram was taken away by this marauder.

*The modern history of Nāñchinād :*

The modern era in the history of Vēṇāḍ and particularly of Nāñchinād may be said to have dawned with the epoch-making reign of Bālamārtāṇḍavarṇa (A.D. 1729-58), the great conqueror and organizer. Prior to his time the power of the Vēṇāḍ king was ineffective; rebellions were frequent and disorder prevailed in several places including Nāñchinād. Moreover, the power of the overweening Yōgakkār was a check on royal authority. Above all, the frequent incursions from the East since the palmy days of Vijayanagar crippled royal authority particularly over Nāñchinād. He was not able to collect the revenue promptly and efficiently.

Mārtāṇḍavarṇa was a born conqueror and administrator. He conquered several places in North Vēṇāḍ, restored order in Nāñchinād and reorganized the system of administration. Mārtāṇḍavarṇa undertook the momentous step of dedicating the entire kingdom of Travancore, as it came to be called, to Śrī Padmanābhasvāmy, the deity of hoary Anantaśayanam or Trivandrum. The ceremony of dedication took place on the morning of the 5th of Tai 925 M. E. (January A.D. 1750). Thenceforward, the king and his successors became the servants of Padmanābhasvāmy and ruled the kingdom on behalf of this tutelary deity. This stroke of policy ennobled the position of the Travancore monarch in the eyes of his sovereign.

*Chandā Sāhib's invasion :*

Meanwhile, in A.D. 1740 there occurred an invasion of Nāñchinād by Chandā Sāhib. Nelson, the author of the

Madura Manual states<sup>76</sup> that in A.D. 1740 the Nawab of Arcot placed Safdar Āli Khan and Chandā Sāhib, both relatives of the Nawab of Arcot, at the head of a large army and entrusted them with the invasion of Travancore. The invasion of Travancorē was part of a general scheme of plunder.

Nelson adds that, after the capture of Tanjavur, the Muslim invaders marched on Travancore and cryptically states that they made themselves masters of the country with great ease. On the other hand, Caldwell<sup>77</sup> gives a different version which tallies with the account of Shankunny Menon, one of the early historians of Travancore, based on the Padmanābhasvāmy Temple Records. Both of these writers state that Mārtāṇḍavarṣma was at this time baffled by several problems. He had to fight with sevral enemies. In particular, the dangers from the Rāja of Kāyaṅkuḷam and from the Dutch, were serious. Therefore, these circumstances compelled Mārtāṇḍavarṣma to settle the Chandā Sāhib affair probably by paying him a large sum of money. Mārtāṇḍavarṣma was assisted in this delicate matter by his astute minister Rāmayyan Daḷavā.

But before the settlement was effected, Chandā Sāhib had done much harm to Nāñchinād. Soon after passing through the Ārvayamoli pass the rapacious host rushed in and attacked Koṭṭaram, ravaging the places on the way. The invaders reached Šuchindram. The authorities of the temple had taken precaution and erected walls enclosing the *garbhagra-has* of the sacred shrines. Nevertheless Chandā Sāhib's party set fire to the car temple. They disfigured images in the external *prākāra*. All the figures of lamp bearers in the inner *prākāra* were damaged. The head of the image of Chandēśvara was broken.

From Suchindram the invading host proceeded to Kōṭṭār, Vadaśśeri, Tiruppatisāram and Vīmaṇasēri, and wherever they went they ravaged the places and caused untold havoc. By this time the negotiations between Mārtāṇḍavarṇa and Chanda Sāhib were completed, and thereafter the party withdrew.

It is not necessary to trace the history of Nāñchinād under the successors of Mārtāṇḍavarṇa. But one important event was that during the reign of Gauri Lakshmi Bāi (A.D. 1811-15) Col. Munro, the Dewan-Resident, in the midst of numerous administrative reforms, ordered in A. D. 1812 the assumption by the Government of the control over the important temples of the State, like that of Suchindram. The Government took over the management and it contributed generally for the improvement of the temples.

In the history of Nāñchinād another change of great importance was introduced during the ministership of Col. Munro. This was the promulgation of a royal proclamation in A.D. 1818 prohibiting all political meetings in Nāñchinād. Col. Munro's predecessor in office, Ummiṇi Tampi had made an attempt at curbing the power of the citizens of Nāñchinād. He had destroyed the drum, the horn and the rod of office of the Periyavīṭu Mudaliār, the accredited leader of Nāñchinād. But his attempt to curb the people's right to hold public meetings did not succeed. It was given to his successor Col. Munro to introduce this prohibitory measure.

Śrī Mūlam Tirunāl (A.D. 1885-1924) was one of the prominent rulers of recent times. Several administrative reforms were introduced. The various Departments of the State like those of Finance, Land Revenue, Judiciary, Education, Irrigation and Public Works were all reorganised and placed on a stable footing. In respect of Nāñchinād

the greatest piece of service was the construction of the Kōdayār Dam and a network of irrigation channels. Completed after seven years of patient labour at a cost of about thirty-three lakhs of Rupees, the Kōdayār Project ensures a regular supply of water for over 50,000 acres of land. It was during the rule of this pious king that a separate Department of Dēvasvams (Temples) was established in A.D. 1922. He was a popular monarch among the people of Nāñchināḍ in particular and frequently he paid royal visits to the famous temples of Kanyākumari, Śuchindram, Krishnankōil (near Nagercoil) and Tiruppatisāram.

Śrī Mūlam Tirunāl was succeeded by Sētu Lakshmi, the Regent on behalf of the young prince Śrī Chitṛa Tirunāl, the next in the line of Śrī Mūlam. During the period of the regency of Sētu Lakshmi, several salutary reforms were introduced among which the most prominent one were the abolition of the Dēvadāsi system in temples and the prohibition of animal sacrifices.

Śrī Chitṛa Tirunāl succeeded her as the ruler in A.D. 1932. During the period of his rule he abolished capital punishment, established the Travancore University and opened several new industries. The construction of a concreted Main Grand Trunk Road running from Trivandrum to Kanyākumari was completed by 1938 and it has facilitated rapid communication between the royal capital and Nāñchināḍ. By far the most momentous reform introduced was the promulgation of the Temple Entry Proclamation in November 1936, which threw open temples to all Hindus including the Untouchables.

In 1947 India became independent, and following that a Reorganisation of States appeared in 1956. The rulers of Native States including Travancore were disinherited

Nāñchinād and some places north of it were included as part of the new Tamil Nādu. On 14th April 1979 a railway connection between Kanyākumari and Trivandrum was opened.

*Social Life and Culture of Medieval and Modern Nāñchinād :*

Right through the history of Nāñchinād, the political, social and religious life had marked resemblance with those of the neighbouring Tamil Nādu. It has been seen how in respect of political institutions during the Śaṅgam age and during the epoch of the Āy rulers more or less the same pattern prevailed. Monarchy was the order of the day.

Wars were not infrequent, first between the Āys and the Pāṇḍyas and later between the Pāṇḍyas and the kings of Vēṇād, the successors of the Āy kings. There was no doubt insecurity in consequence; but by and large they were not days of total warfare. Except in rare cases as in respect of the Nayak incursions the normal day-to-day life of the people was not affected.

The kings maintained a certain measure of peace and security. Several of the kings were interested in literature and they patronised scholars. Poets have sung in praise of the unbounded liberality of the Āy kings. Even the later Āys of the 8th and 9th century A.D. were patrons of poets and temples. Nāñchil Valluvan, too, was liberal in his patronage of the learned and poor. Though our information is exclusively one-sided, it enables us to have an idea of the prevailing notions of a king's duties and responsibilities. It is well known that the ideals of monarchy laid down in the Kuṛal are of a very high order; and these seem to have been constantly pressed on the monarch's attention by the numerous poets of the land and the advisers of the king in the royal courts. Kingship gained considerably in strength and popular esteem as years rolled on. No doubt it depended, in a certain measure, on

the outlook and individuality of particular monarchs. But by and large the ideals of Hindu monarchy were followed by the Vēṇāḍ and Pāṇḍya kings who wielded authority over Nāñchināḍ.

The kings were assisted by ministers, but it is unlikely that there were Councils of ministers. Nor is it legitimate to exaggerate and generalise the nature and functions of the village assemblies from the Pāṇḍyan inscription at Mānūr and the Chōla inscription at Uttaramērūr. It must be clearly understood that they pertain to the sabhās of the brahmadēyas. In these sabhās, no doubt a system of self-government, including the privilege of employing election of members by lot prevailed. But several writers, Western and Indian, have sought to adopt generalisations pertaining to village self-government based on the data relating to the sabhās.

However, beginning from the age of the Saṅgam onwards a crude pattern of village self-government prevailed in Nāñchināḍ, Vēṇāḍ and the Pāṇḍyan country. Each village had a manṭram or the village gathering where the people transacted the business of the village. It played a role in the administration of justice. The circumstance that the kings of Nāñchināḍ were frequently involved in war must have naturally led to the growth of virile village institutions which attended to the common affairs.

In the days of the Nāñchināḍ and later Vēṇāḍ rulers, the village organisations gained in strength. Nor were the villages isolated units. Assemblies of the chief men of several villages (each group called pidāgais) gathered together and considered questions of general importance. At times there were meetings of the 'nāḍus' as a whole. They seem to have been common by the 12th century A.D. The 'Manuscripts' present a vivid

picture of these organisations in the 16th and 17th centuries. It is obvious that they could not have sprung up all too suddenly. Their virility at a later stage is an indication that they should have continued to function over a long period. There is evidence to show that before the 13th century the whole of Nāñchināḍ was divided into 12 piḍāgais and that there were piḍāgaikkūṭtams as well as Nāṭtukkūṭtams where the chief men of all villages met to decide important questions of common interest.

When did Marumakkattāyam enter Vēṇāḍ? Perhaps it had appeared earlier than the 14th century. In the Kañchīpuram inscription Jayasimha is described as the Yādava king, who ruled over Kēraḷa, and not as the king of Kūpaka. On the other hand, Ravi Varma was proud to style himself as the Kūpaka Sarvabhauma. The explanation of T. K. Velu Pillai is that Ravi Varma succeeded to the throne of Vēṇāḍ through the matrilineal title. Jayasimha's relation with Vēṇāḍ could not have begun before he married Umā Dēvi. The Marumakkattāyam system and matrilineal system of inheritance were thrust on certain communities of Nāñchināḍ by the Vēṇāḍ kings.

### *Social Life :*

The first question that arises regarding the social and cultural history of Nāñchināḍ is the extent to which Āryani-sation of this region took place. It is indisputable that even a few centuries prior to the Christian era, the infiltration of the Aryans into Nāñchināḍ had begun. References to brāhmaṇins and to their high social position are found in the early Tamil classics. Tolkappiyānār, the author of the earliest Tamil work extant<sup>78</sup> was himself a brāhmaṇin. Tolkāppiyam accords the highest social eminence to brāhmaṇins, and refers to the four-fold

classification of castes, antaṇar (brāhmaṇs), araśar (kshatriyas) vaṇikar (merchants) and vellālas (agriculturists).<sup>79</sup>

The introduction of the traditional four-fold classification combined with the social divisions based on the physiological divisions of land were effected by the Āryans. The subdivision of the last caste into many groups in accordance with the occupations followed by them was mainly based upon the indigenous divisions. It appears to have been the product of the fusion of the Āryan and Dravidian ideas. References to Veṭṭālas, Maṭavar and Āyar, for instance, abound. The distinctions which had originally existed among the Dravidians based on geographical and natural features of the regions - the hunter, the fishermen, the herdsmen and the farmers - reflecting respectively the occupations of people in the hill, the coast, the forest and the riverine region might have shown a tendency to get petrified and absorbed into a new substrata with the onrush of the Āryan institution of caste.

But it seems strange that Kanakasabhai Pillai should have suggested that the division of classes amongst the Tamils bears a striking resemblance to the seven divisions among the Magadhans as described by Megasthenes. For one thing it is difficult to find any direct association between the Magadhans and the Tamilians. To postulate a theory of connection between the two, the ground that the Tamil kingdoms had "Five Great Assemblies" as in Magadha, is certainly unconvincing. Secondly, the conclusions which Megasthenes arrived at, are themselves based on an incorrect appreciation of the existing divisions. Assuredly, spies, or overseers did not then, or any time, constitute a separate caste as Megasthenes has taken them to be.

The Āys belonged to the caste of shepherds and cowherds. They might have come from the Podiyil Hills but those hills

were located in Tamil Nādu and so the pattern of caste system of the Śaṅgam age in the rest of Tamil Nādu must have prevailed in the land of the Āys also. There is a legend regarding the origin of the Āys which has been developed by some poets. According to this the Āys are said to have come from the great Vēl who is believed to have taken his birth from the fire pit in the north Indian mountain and ruled Dvāraka. In support of this, Kapilar's verse in Puranānūru (201) is quoted, in which Iruṅgōvēl, a member of the Vēlir line is stated to have been descended from the Great Vēl of the North. This is sought to be reinforced by references from the Purāṇas which hold that the great Yādus branched off from Dvāraka into a number of groups like Bhōjas, Vṛṣṇi and Yādavas. Added to these is the fact that Vikramāditya Varaguṇa, the Āy ruler, states in his Pāliyam Plates that he belonged to the Vṛṣṇi tribe.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to accept this account of their origin as historically reliable. Tracing a glorious descent and constructing ingenious genealogies were not uncommon in our country. And poets, as well as Purāṇic writers were none too few to furnish a realistic touch to the mythical legends. Perhaps some of the Āys had come from the north. Nachchinārkkiniyar also records the tradition that Agastya brought with him the Vēlir the descendants of Kṛṣṇa. Just as the legend of Agastya itself is now rightly interpreted as an allegoric version of the advent of the Āryans into South India, this tradition perhaps records nothing but the immigration of the Vēlir into Tamilakam. But, to proceed beyond this and to associate them with Dvāraka and Kṛṣṇa is to transport ourselves to the realm of myths.

Regarding the caste of the Āys, legends accord to them the position of Kshatriyas. This is supported by the Purāṇi

account ascribing to the Yādavas the descent from Yadu. This social promotion appears to be no more true to facts than the grounds on which occur the recent elevations of several castes to the rank of Kshatriyas. Some writers like Kanakasabhai Pillai and M. Raghava Aiyangar connect the Vēlir with Vellālas. What appears probable is that the Āys were originally shepherds and cowherds, the name Āy or Ayar having been derived from the word Ā meaning a cow. Either when a northern tribe of Vēlir became fused with them or when they themselves assumed royal power, legends were created with a view to giving them a glorified origin and an exalted caste. We have noticed earlier how Vēṇāḍ itself was derived from a combination of Vēl and nāḍ. The Vēṇāḍ ruler was a descendent of the Āy Vēl of early times.

In this connection it is noteworthy that there is an interesting group of people in the Kalkulam taluk of South Travancore called Krishnānvagaikkār. They live in various villages round about modern Tiruviḍaikkōdu, Tiruvitāmkōdu and Padmanābhapuram. In all probability they are the descendants of the Āys. It is a significant fact that certain families among them are formally informed about important domestic occurrences, like births or deaths in the old royal family of Travancore (Vēṇāḍ). Members of these families observe pollution in connection with deaths in the Vēṇāḍ royal line. The Krishnānvagaikkār were originally classed as Yādavas or shepherds, though latterly most of them have betaken themselves to agriculture.

Cutting across the five regions there had arisen several castes in the Saṅgam age itself. As years rolled on, the number of castes increased. Nāñchināḍ was no exception to these changes. In Tamilakam as a whole, the Saṅgam age

had already witnessed the existence of the Brahmin class; but the domination of the priestly class had not begun. It appeared gradually, particularly from the time of the Pallavas. In fact the Āryanisation of Tamil Nādu cannot be said to have begun from the time of the Śaṅgam age in its entirety. V. A. Smith wrote : 'The Tamils had developed an advanced civilization of their own, wholly independent of North India. Immigrants from the North, who had settled at Madurai and some other cities, sought to introduce Hindu notions of caste and ceremonial, but met with much opposition, and caste system, which for many centuries past has been observed with special strictness in the South was then inchoate and imperfect.' It is admitted that Brāhmins had also contributed some poems of the Śaṅgam literature and that the process of Āryanisation or Sanskritisation went on vigorously in later times. But its date and the nature and results of the influence must be impartially assessed.

The status of women in Tamilian society in Nāñchinād was considerably high. There was an air of rustic simplicity and freedom from later-day cant and man-made conventions. Women mixed freely in the routine life as well as in the gay amusements of the day. Not to speak of the women of the poorer classes who worked as hawkers or vendors, the rich too were free from any kind of conventional seclusion. But gradually in the medieval period, the position of women declined. They became confined to the house. Man became the master of the home and society. The Dēvadāsi system became more and more popular with the growth of temples. The Dēvadāsis declined and sold their body for filthy lucre. The Nambūdris of Kēraḷa who became dominant in Śuchindram and other temples were to some extent responsible for the growth of the Dēvadāsi system. Others, particularly the Veljālas Nāyars and Chetṭiyārs followed them and the system itself witnessed degeneration from about the 16th

century. It is worthy of note that originally unflinching attachment and fidelity existed among the married couples. Great emphasis was laid on chastity by Tiruvalluvar in his immortal *Tirukkural*. Again, the fidelity of Kuravā girls is immortalised in Kalittogai (stanza 39). If the prevalence of a high standard of morality side by side with freedom and absence of prudery is a mark of civilization, the Tamils have every reason to be proud of their ancestors.

One distinctive feature of the social organization of a certain section of the people of Vēṇāḍ and of Nāñchināḍ, as noticed earlier, was the adoption of the matrilineal system of inheritance by certain sections like the Nāñchināḍ Vellālas, the Krishnanvagaikkārs, Nāyars and some Īlavās. How and when did this matrilineal system enter Kēraḷa, Vēṇāḍ and Nāñchināḍ? These are difficult questions to be answered, for no authentic source of history explains them. One surmise is that the Nambūdiris were responsible for the introduction of the matrilineal system into Kēraḷa after their immigration into the country. In order to maintain the purity and superiority of their race they adopted the strange practice of allowing only their eldest sons to marry within their own community. The rest entered into marital relationship with Nāyars who had to inevitably adopt the matrilineal system of inheritance. In due course it was adopted by the royal family. That paved the way for its adoption by the Krishnanvagaikkār, Nāñchināḍ Vellālas and certain Īlavās and even Muslims. The operation of the system among the Krishnanvagaikkār and Nāñchināḍ Vellālas is examined in other sections of these studies. This theory seems plausible; but when the Nambūdiris entered Kēraḷa is another unsolved problem. It should have been sometime before the 7th century A. D. But it took several centuries before the matrilineal system was adopted. Probably it was introduced into Kēraḷa about the 12th century A. D. and it appeared in Vēṇāḍ and Nāñchināḍ in or after the 14th century A. D.

The royal family of Vēṇāḍ seems to have adopted it only about the 12th century A. D. By the time of Ravivarman Kulaśēkhara it had been adopted by the royal family of Vēṇāḍ. As mentioned earlier, this famous monarch who lived between A.D. 1266 and 1312 seems to have succeeded to the Vēṇāḍ throne through the matrilineal right, for it is seen that Ravivarman's father Jayasimha's relation with Vēṇāḍ could not have begun before he married Umā Dēvi and Ravivarman inherited his right of rule over Vēṇāḍ only through his mother's claim. But probably a few centuries before this, the matrilineal system was adopted.

A popular ballad, as quoted earlier, said to have been current in Nāñchināḍ refers to Vīra Kēraḷa's conquest of Vēṇāḍ in A.D. 1106 or A. D. 1116. Now Vīra Kēraḷa seems to have introduced the matrilineal system among a certain section of the Veṭṭālas. It is also believed that when a contest between the Pāṇḍya ruler and Vēṇāḍ king arose regarding the control over Nāñchināḍ, the Vēṇāḍ king is said to have induced the Nāñchināḍ Veṭṭālas to swear in the Madurai temple that they had been under the sovereignty of the Vēṇāḍ ruler for a long time and as an evidence of that they stated that like the Vēṇāḍ king they were the followers of the matrilineal systems of inheritance. Some of the Krishnanvāgaikkār and Īlavās seem to have adopted it about the same time. The royal status which the system had received contributed to its popularity.

A remarkable feature in the popular traditions in Nāñchināḍ is that people of several castes believe that they were immigrants from the Coromandel region. Puhār or Kāverippūmpaṭṭinam is the place from which the ancestors of several people are said to have come. On the destruction of this ancient capital of the Chōḷas by the erosion of

the sea, they immigrated into Nāñchinād. Among people who are supposed to have immigrated into Nāñchinād are the Vellālas, the Chettis, the Kaikkōlars and the Chāliyas. It seems to have been a fabrication of later times. However, this legend seems to have entered in the native folklore and popular songs like *Villippāttu*, which was once a peculiar pattern of song in the temples of goddesses like Amman in Nāñchinād, as in the Tinnevelly District.

### *Religion :*

That the Tamilians of old worshipped numerous gods and goddesses like Muruga, Śiva, Kāli, Mādan and Iśakki is gathered from their early literature as well as from the surviving relics. The huntsmen and hill tribes or Kuṭavas worshipped the heroic God of War, Muruga, whose temples were invariably located on top of hills. Even today some old shrines dedicated to Muruga are found in Kumarakōil, Vēli Malai, Maruṅgūr and Āralvāymoli in Nāñchinād.

The Tolkāppiyam speaks of gods specially appropriate to the love situations of particular regions. Thus, Sēyon (Murugan) was the deity of Kuṛiñchi, Māyōn (Māl or Vishṇu) was of Mullai, Vēndan or Indra of Marudam and Varuṇa of Neydal. The Pālai is not mentioned in this context probably because it comprised the desert region where unsocial elements comprising robbers dominated. From the references in other works of the Śaṅgam literature it is learnt that the deity specially associated with the Pālai was the goddess Korṛavai. However, there is clear evidence that by the Śaṅgam age itself the fusion of Dravidian and Aryan religious practices had commenced. In respect of the importance attached to particular deities, there seems to have occurred changes from time to time. Korṛavai became transformed into Kāli and other goddesses.

The Āys, the shepherd class worshipped their national hero Krishṇa and his elder brother Balarāma. It is remarkable that as contrasted with the position on the Coromandel coast, Nāñchināḍ and the neighbouring Kuṛunāḍu have numerous Vishṇu temples. Some of them are famous ones like those at Tiruvāṭṭār, Tiruveṇpatisāram and Parakkai. This feature is ascribable to the influence of the Āys, who were traditional worshippers of Vishṇu. The association of later Vēṇāḍ rulers to Padmanābha is itself attributable to the same influence.

From the early period, among the higher classes of Tamils, the favourite deity was Śiva. However, as mentioned earlier, there occurred a gradual fusion in the pantheon of gods and goddesses worshipped by the people as a consequence of the Āryan influence.

In Āynāḍ, there flourished in medieval times several sālais which served as educational institutions of Brāhmaṇins. Over the nature of Kāndaṭūr Śālai endless discussion has gone on. But there is no doubt that the Śālais were educational and charitable institutions. Kāndaṭūr Śālai might have been a port as well as an educational institution.

In Nāñchināḍ, besides Hindu temples there existed certain Jain shrines. The pagoda at Nagercoil was unquestionably a Jain temple till the 15th century A.D. as inscriptions testify. The mention of endowments to Jayaguṇa Pāṇḍita in an inscription in the temple makes it clear. But it is difficult to estimate the date of the origin of the Jain temple. The glorious age of Jainism in South India appeared in the early centuries of the Christian era, while the period of the Nāyanmār witnessed a revival of Hinduism. It is possible that the Jain temple at Nagercoil had arisen before the 6th century

A.D. Moreover, there is epigraphic evidence to show that there existed a flourishing Jain colony in Kuṇḍi near Śuchiṇdram till 13th century A.D. But unlike in districts like North Arcot and South Arcot there are a few people who continue to adhere to the Jain faith while observing certain Hindu customs. But Bhagavati worship was common in Vēṇāḍ and Nāñchināḍ. Tiruchāraṇattu malai in the Viṭavankōdu taluk has a famous Bhagavati temple. It seems to have continued till about 13th century A.D.

Buddhism also was prevalent in various parts of Vēṇāḍ. It may be noted that the Āy ruler Vikramāditya Varaguṇa who succeeded Kōkkaruṇandaḍakkan became a convert to Buddhism and bestowed gifts on both the Buddhist temple at Śrīmūlavāsam and the Jain temple at Citaral. This shows that both Jainism and Buddhism had appeared in this region some time before the 9th century A.D.

The Buddhist relics are found generally in central Vēṇāḍ, beyond Nāñchināḍ, mainly in the taluks of Māvēlikara, Kunṇattūr, Karunāgappalli and Ambalappula. However, Buddhism declined among the masses at an early date. Śāṅkarāchārya's triumph over Buddhist theologians contributed much to the decline of Buddhism in Vēṇāḍ and Kēraḷa.

#### *Christians :*

It is believed that the Christians and the Jews came to Kēraḷa in the 1st century A.D. However, they had not much to do with Vēṇāḍ and even Nāñchināḍ until a much later date. Christianity entered Nāñchināḍ through the Coromandel coast. Francis Xavier did much to convert many Paravas and even Veljālas as Roman Catholics in Nāñchināḍ in the 16th century. Their strong centres were Kōṭṭar and Aloor. A little later came the London Mission Society which converted

Shānārs in Nagercoil, Puttēri, Bhūtappāṇḍy and several places in Nāñchināḍ. Schools were opened and hospitals established in several places in Nāñchināḍ. The Lutheran Mission also played a considerable part in the matter of conversion and establishment of schools and hospitals. The Shānārs had been for centuries ill treated and kept under restraint by people of high castes. Eventually the ruler of Travancore issued a proclamation so late as A.D. 1829 redressing many of their grievances. For instance, the Shānār women were thereafter allowed the freedom to cover the upper parts of their body. Later the Temple Entry Proclamation, as noticed earlier, removed the disability of the Shānārs, Īlavās and other lower castes, entering the temples. Education has spread among the converted Christians, particularly among the Protestant Christians.

### *The Muslims :*

They came to the Kēraḷa Coast in the 8th century A.D. from Arabia for the purpose of trade. In due course, they moved on to the Coromandel coast in small numbers.

Though they came to the Pāṇḍyan kingdom occasionally in the 14th century as aggressors they did not invade Nāñchināḍ. Ishwari Prasad is inaccurate in his statement that 'the whole of South India lay at the feet of Mālik Kāfūr'<sup>80</sup>.

On their way to Kāyalpaṭṭinam and other places in Pāṇḍināḍ some Arabs had settled in parts of Nāñchināḍ, particularly in Kōṭṭār and Iḍalakkudi. Some had settled in Tiruvitāṅkōdu to the west of present Nāñchināḍ. Probably, the famous saint, Mālik ību Dīnār had mosques constructed in Kōṭṭār and Tiruvitāṅkōdu. From the Diary of Charles Mead, quoted by Āgūr in his 'Church History of Travancore,' it is learnt that the Muslim mosque was built near Nagercoil,

probably before the 10th century A.D. The Muslims of later times made their share of contribution at various stages to Muslim architecture and Tamil literature. Several Durgas and mosques were constructed at various times. But, doubtless they were smaller in size and inferior in style to those in the Deccan and North India. At Kōṭṭār there are several memorials including that of the modern Seikuttambi Pāvalar who was also a famous *Satāyadāni*, capable of concentrating on many things at the same time. He had also learnt the philosophic truths of several Hindu saints including those of the celebrated Rāmalingasvāmīgał. He was also an ardent patriot of India.

Earlier, too, there were Muslim poets of note in Nāñchinād. Alippulavar was perhaps the earliest among them. He was the author of the famous '*Mihirājmālai*' which describes the ascension of Muhammad the Prophet to Heaven. This poem was composed in A.D. 1620. Another poet of a slightly later period was Pīr Muhammad Sāhib, who wrote several philosophical works like '*Jñānapukalṭchchi*' and *Jñānamāṇi-mālai*. He was a gifted writer and was popularly known as "Appa". Nevertheless, the poets and writers of Pāṇḍinād and Chōjanād had made greater contributions to Tamil literature than those of Nāñchinād.

Later, in A. D. 1740, as noticed earlier, Chandā Sāhib sent by the Nawab of Arcot attacked Šuchindram and Kōṭṭār and plundered the people. It is likely that he and his followers converted some Hindus into Islam. However, the ruling sovereign of Vēṇād made peace with Chandā Sāhib through the mediation of Dewan Rāmayyan Dałava. The well-known invader Tippu Sultan tried several attacks on Travancore, but did not succeed. When exactly the conversion of several Hindus in southern Pāṇḍinād and Nāñchinād took

place cannot be stated precisely. But it should have occurred during the period of the Sultanate of Madurai. In parts of Nāñchinād and even Vēṇād several conversions were effected. But they have been in a minority and no Hindu Muslim conflict has occurred.

*Economic Conditions:* Nāñchinād was famous for the fertility of its soil throughout the ages. In fact, even the region to the west of Nāñchinād proper was fertile. Agriculture has been the principal occupation of the people. It was reputed as the granary of Vēṇād. Among the agricultural produce, besides paddy, pepper, gingelly, cardamom and other spices were common. Spinning cotton was an occupation of many women, and even silk was woven.

Both Tamil literary works and inscriptions testify to the fact that Vāriyūr and Maṇarkudi in Nāñchinād were engaged in the manufacture of salt. Besides, an extensive trade in fish is known to have flourished. Kanyakumari, Muṭṭam and other coastal towns had a busy trade in fish. There is a notable concurrency of testimony between the Śaṅgam works and the Periplus on the commercial activity on the ports of the west coast and the Coromandel coast.

In respect of internal trade Kōṭṭār appears to have gained a remarkable prominence from early times. Both Pliny and Ptolemy mention it in their accounts. That it was considered as the principal town of Nāñchinād is seen from early Tamil works. Kōṭṭār figures prominently in the Pāṇḍyan attacks on Nāñchinād. Early in his reign, Rāja Raja Chōla captured it and renewed it as "Mummuḍi-Chōlapuram." In the Chōla, Vijayanagar and Nāyak periods it maintained its commercial importance.

In respect of the nature of holdings the brahmadēya formed a class by itself. Their number increased during the

medieval period. The kind of tenure on which the brahmadēya was held differed from that of the dēvadāna and sāla bhōga. These tenures were generally created by the purchase of land from previous occupants. The occupancy rights varied with each case. In some cases the occupants had subordinate cultivation rights. More often than not, the lands were made *iraiyili* free from the obligation to pay taxes. Others had to pay taxes. The description *ekabhōga* implied that unlike the usual brahmadēya shared by a number of donees, this was to benefit only one individual.

In respect of the lands held by private individuals or families the taxation was heavy in Nāñchinād as in the rest of Vēñād ; the people sometimes protested. No doubt, satisfactory irrigation facilities were provided ; but they were suited only for those times when the population was not large.

In this connection as mentioned earlier a peculiar feature prevalent among the Nāñchinād Vellālās, and also among some of the Krishnavaikār and the Īlavās was the matrilineal system of inheritance. Among the Nāñchinād Vellālās, a small portion of the father's property was inherited. This was called Ukantudamai. Commonly the matrilineal system was prevalent only among the Nāñchinād Vellālās. It was common among the Nayars of Vēñād and a section of the Mōplahs in Kērala. The Marumakkattāyam system of inheritance brought on its wake widow remarriage and encouraged polygamy. In fact the artificial Marumakkattāyam system proved a vexatious social practice and the people, particularly the women, suffered a great deal under its baneful influence. There was agitation among the advanced sections of the people to cast it aside. A move was made in the Legislature and ultimately the Marumakkattāyam among the Nāñchinād Vellālas was abolished by a Regulation of 1926.

Trade organisations flourished in towns of Nāñchinād as in the rest of Vēṇād and in Chōla dēśa. But their number and vigour were much less in Nāñchinād than in the Chōla territory. Trade organisations became more popular in the 15th and 17th centuries. With the advent of the British, the position changed for the better, because commercial enterprises increased.

#### *Education :*

There seems to have occurred in the Śaṅgam age and still later between the 5th and 8th centuries A.D., a considerable inflow of Āryan population by means of settlements of Brāhmaṇin colonies. True, even after the 8th century A.D. the practice of establishing brāhmaṇin colonists near new temples or sometimes near old and famous temples was common in South India. But so far as Nāñchinād and the region in its vicinity are concerned, a considerable number of such settlements was established during the period subsequent to the 8th century A.D. They appeared by the side of temples already in existence like those of Śuchīndram, Kanyākumari, Darśanamkōpe or in places where new shrines were established as Pārvatīpuram and Putugramam. It need hardly be mentioned that these colonists formed the real agents in the infusion of Āryan ideas and culture. These settlements or colonies were known as brahmadēyas or chaturvēdimāṅgalams as in other parts of South India.

The term ‘chaturvēdimāṅgalam’ denotes a village inhabited, primarily by pious and learned brāhmaṇins, well versed in the Vēdas. Brahmadēyas, Māṅgalams or Agrahāras, as they were variously called, were mostly created by royal grants. Faith in the unique merit of the gift of land (*bhūdāns*) to brāhmaṇins explains the endowments given to numerous brahmadēyas. Invariably the object of the endowment was to enable the donees to lead a religious life performing the rites and

ceremonies of the village temple. The rights of cultivation, as also supervision and control of the lands within the boundaries of the brahmadēya were bestowed on the brāhmaṇī beneficiaries of the gift deed itself. This is inferred from a typical grant of a brahmadēya recorded in the Madras Museum Plates and another in an inscription at Agastīsvaram, a suburb of Nagercoil. Ordinarily when the gift was made, the donor recounted all rights over the villages including the right of taxation. The statement “ஸர்வ பரிகாரமாக நீரோட்டடி கொடுக்கப் பட்டது”, occurring in several of these grants indicates the transfer of the entire right.

The great importance of these colonies is that almost from the outset the brāhmaṇī settlers began teaching the Vēdas, philosophy, grammar and other subjects. It must be clearly remembered that the instruction was absolutely confined to brahmin pupils.

In other temples endowments were made for the free feeding of brāhmaṇins. The feeding Hall was called ‘Śālai’ and in places where this assumed a prominence the village itself came to be known as ‘Śālai.’ It is important to notice that as adjuncts to these Śālais libraries were attached, and they turned out to be prominent centres of learning. There is clear evidence to show that in and around Nāñchināḍi, there existed several such Śālais in the medieval period. The famous Kandalūr Śālai, Karaikkāṇḍēśvaram, Talaikkulam, Pārtivāśēkharapuram and Kanyākumari were some of the important ones. The Huzur Office Plates refer to the construction of a temple and a college at Pārtivāśēkharapuram to the making of rich endowments to both by the chieftain Kōkkarunandaḍakkan.

The Śālai at Kanyākumari was famous. The reference to it in inscriptions as<sup>81</sup> ஸ்ரீ வஸ்லவப் பெருஞ்சாலைப்பான ராஜ ராஜப்பெருஞ்சாலை’ shows that it was in existence even before

the time of Rāja Rāja. Probably it was established by Śri Māra Śrī Vallabha Pāṇḍya who commenced his rule early in the 9th century A.D.

*Temples :*

As in the rest of Tamil Nādu Nāñchinād has numerous temples, both of the Śaiva and Vaishṇavite persuasions. There were many temples for village deities as well. Temples, no doubt, are of different sizes and grandeur. The temple at Kanyākumari is held particularly sacred by devotees all over India. But in respect of grandeur, artistic excellence and admixture of Tamil and Malayalam influences, there is none to beat the great Śuchīndram temple. It is a treasure-house of art. It is sacred for both the Śaivites and the Vaishṇavites ; the Vadakkēḍam is no doubt the principal shrine, the presiding deity of which is Śiva. The Tekkēḍam is dedicated to Vishṇu. In fact, the tradition is that it is a temple of the Trimūrtis, Brahmā, Śiva and Vishṇu. The name of the temple Sthāṇumālaya indicates it.

It contains numerous epigraphs, several excellent pieces of sculpture, as well as admirable specimens of wood-carving. There are 'musical pillars' as in several other temples of Tamil Nādu. The *gopura* or entrance tower and the temple cars are all of a high order.

On account of the domination of the Vēṇāḍ rulers for several centuries, there has appeared an admixture of the Malayāli and Tamilian patterns of rituals and ceremonies. The Nambūdiris have held a prominent place in the management and in the conduct of the sacred rites. Thus the temple is unique in several ways.

*Tamil language in Nāñchinād :*

While the learning propagated in the Śālais directly helped only the brāhmins, it was bound to influence the culture of the land. In several respects the intermingling of the two languages and civilisations of the north and south are traceable. Tamil never lost its individuality; and in Nāñchinād, at the southernmost extremity of India, it has all through the ages maintained its distinct position. It is notable that from the days of the Śaṅgam Age Nāñchinād and the adjoining regions were conspicuous for the patronage and development of the Tamil language. The great work *Tolkāppiyam* had to be accepted by the Śaṅga or Sabha which was then presided over by Atamkōṭṭātan (Atamkōṭṭāśān), who was obviously a native of modern South Travancore. As mentioned earlier, Atamkōdu is a village situated southwest of Tiruvitāmkōdu, a prominent centre of the Āy kings. Āśān is a common honorific appellation of savants and experts in learning, in astrology, medicine etc. Again, in the 8th century A.D., a poet Ilamperumānagar of Kōṭṭār was one of the four poets who have sung about the king, Perumpiḍugu Muttarayan. This is learnt from an inscription in the Śiva temple at Chēndalai or Chandralēkaicchchadur-vēdimāngalam, near Tiruchchirāppaṭṭi. Finally it is pertinent to recall at this juncture that works like *Padigṛuppattu*, *Ainkurunūru*, *Kalittogai*, *Silappadikāram*, *Puṇapporuḷvenbāmālai*, *Ponvaṇṇattandādi*, *Tirukkailāya Jñāna Ulā*, *Perumā! Tirumoḷi*, to mention the prominent ones, were all works contributed by or under the patronage of Chēra and Vēṇād kings of old. Very recently among the palm-leaf manuscripts found in the palace at Trivandrum has been discovered an old version of ‘*Hariccandra Venba*’ edited recently by Rao Sahib M. Raghava Aiyangar. These prove clearly that Tamil was in a flourishing condition in the whole of Travancore, including Nāñchinād.

But while brāhmaṇins had the benefit of higher education, patronised by kings, it cannot be said that the non-brāhmaṇin communities, even the higher classes among them were given all the benefits of education. To say that early education in Tamil Nādu was imparted to all irrespective of caste as is claimed by M. Arunachalam is not warranted by facts of medieval Tamil Nādu.<sup>82</sup> In fact, the invidious distinctions observed in the system of education from the Śaṅgam age down to the establishment of British rule is one of the basic factors which had led to the perpetuation of caste and the disabilities of the non-brāhmaṇins and of the depressed classes. It must be admitted that the cultural progress of the non-brāhmaṇins has been considerably affected by this feature. This is true, even making allowances for non-brāhmaṇin poets and artists who have appeared in the medieval times.

In the post Śaṅgam age except in brahmadēyas the progress of education among the non-brāhmaṇins was poor. But the Maṭhas, Śaiva and Vaishṇava, provided education particularly religious and philosophical, for non-brāhmaṇin caste Hindus. But the lower classes among them did not have adequate facilities for higher education. It is the advent of the Missionaries that opened a new chapter in the history of education in Nāñchināḍ as in Tiruchchirāppaṭṭi, Madurai and Tirunelveli districts. They opened schools and colleges. Whatever the ulterior motives, many people, including the untouchables benefited to a certain extent by the development of education in Nāñchināḍ. Some recent poets of note like Kavimāṇi and Šeikuttampi Pāvalar are among those who have shed lustre on Nāñchināḍ.

## NOTES

1. Kambar's description of Ayōdhyā contains the following line :—  
‘ குந்த நான்சில் குழந்த ஆரை கற்றுமுற்று பாரோலாம் ’  
(கம்பராமாயணம் : நகரப்படலம் : 17)
2. Stanza 19, Puranānūru.
3. Nagam Aiya : Travancore State Manual, Vol. I, p. 210.
4. Mc Crindle : Indian Antiquary, Vol. VIII, pp. 145.
5. Nelcyṇḍa was identified on the one hand with Kallaḍa by Col. Yule, and on the other with Niṇḍakara near Quilon by the late Mr. K. G. Sesha Aiyar. But neither seems to fit in, because Periplus locates Nelcyṇḍa 500 stadia distant from Muziris, while both Kallaḍa and Niṇḍakara are more than 800 stadia away from it. Apparently Kanakasabhai Pillay's identification of the place with Nirkunram near Minaccil seems correct.
6. Mc Crindle : Indian Antiquary, Vol. XIII, p. 329.
7. Nor does a recent attempt at identifying Āykuḍy with Iḍalakuḍy, a suburb of Kōṭṭār, seem acceptable, for Iḍalakuḍy stands at a considerable distance from Podiyilmalai.
8. K. N. Sivaraja Pillay : “The Chronology of the Early Tamils” pp. 146-7.
9. It is important to note that Elini Atan, in whose honour Māñikuḍi Kilār has composed a verse, was ruling in Tiruvāṭṭār. The term Elini is a Chēra name found attached to the names of the kings of the Adiyamān branch of Chēras who ruled over Takaḍūr. Adigamān Neḍumānañchi of Takaḍūr himself bore the name of Elini. A relevant fact to be noticed in this context is that several kings belonging to the Āy line ruled in South India. Eiyan ruled over Vejiyan in north Travancore. Ahanānūru (208 and 396). Pēgan of Nallūr was an Āy.
10. Puranānūru, Stanza 380.

11. An attempt made to question the contact of the Kalabhras with Tamil Naṭu (Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures; 1976 January to June) is not convincing.
12. K. A. Nilakanta Sāstri: "The Pāṇḍyan Kingdom" p. 24.
13. An attempt to question this date by Dr. B. G. L. Swamy has been contradicted by me in the Journal of Indian History, Vol. Lv.
14. Travancore Archaeological Series, (T. A. S.) Vol. III, p. 204.
15. *Ibid.* p. 198.
16. *Ibid.* p. 176.
17. The Tamil Saṅgam Dictionary mentions 'Kuṭunilamannar' as a general name applied to the Vēlir. But apparently its genesis is traceable to the fact that they were rulers of Kuṭunāṭu.
18. Travancore Archaeological Series, Vol. III, (T.A.S. Vol. III), pp. 204.
19. Commenting on the newly discovered Sivakasi Plates of Vira Pāṇḍya, Dr. K. V. Raman offers the view that Sri Vallabha and his father Tivra Kōpa (probably another name for Varaguṇa I) waged war with the Chēras. But this is only a plausible suggestion. Perhaps the genealogy given in the Sivakasi Plates represents a collateral branch of the Pāṇḍya line.
20. The Daļavāipuram Plates show that Varaguṇa II was the elder brother of Vira Nārāyaṇa Chaḍaiyan and that they had a joint rule because Varaguṇa I was absorbed in his devotion to Siva.
21. T. A. S. (Travancore Archaeological Series) IV, pp. 121-3.
22. T. A. S. Vol. I, p. 188. Vēl and Āy refer to the same people; Vēl was the family name of the Āys. This is clear from Puṭanāṭu; Stanzas 133 and 135.
23. *Tolkāppiyam*, Sutra 395,

24. K. N. Sivaraja Pillay : "The Chronology of the Early Tamils" p. 168. He states : "The story of the Āy Kings belongs to one of the earliest chapters in Tamil history, which remains yet to be written".
25. The negative evidence that the name Venād was not employed in any of the other Saṅgam works and that it was not referred to as such in the Periplus or in Ptolemy's Geography does not prove that it was not in usage in the time of Tolkappiyānār.
26. Prof. Sundaram Pillay took Venād to mean 'the lovely land' (Indian Antiquary, Vol. XXIV, p. 254). Mr. K. V. Subramania Aiyar, too, was inclined to accept this derivation Ven Nād (J. R. A. S. 1922; pp 164-5).
27. T. K. Velu Pillai : Travancore State Manual, Vol. I, p. 42, (Foot note).
28. T. A. S., Vol. I, p. 291.
29. T. A. S., Vol. V, p. 116. See M. Raghava Aiyangar : 'Vēlir Varalāṭu' : pp. 32-33. See also T. K. Velu Pillai : Travancore State Manual : Vol. II, p. 66, for his views on Malaināḍu. The truth seems to be that Malaināḍu, meaning mountainous country, denoted the whole of the region comprised in Malabar, Cochin and Travancore, all included in present Kēraḷa.
30. Kēraḷamāhātmyam.
31. T. A. S., Vol. VI, pp. 79-80.
32. T. K. Velu Pillai : Travancore State Manual Vol. II. Appendix, p. 114-5. The Western boundary of Nāñchināḍ seems to have varied from time to time. At times it stretched up to Āykuḍi near Shencoṭṭah. Occasionally it reached up to Tiruvalla, as Ilankulam Kunjan Pillai in his 'Kēraḷa Charitra Praśnaṅgal' says on p. 83. Today it comprises technically only Tōvalai and Agastvaram Taluks, though actually parts of Kalkuḷam share the features, social and economic, of Nāñchināḍ.
33. Some Epigraphists have read Rāja Rāja's title as 'Mummadi-chīḍā dēva'. See S. I. I. II Intr p. 3 and note 6. This does not make any sense. On the other hand when he became master of Northern Ceylon he called it Mummuḍi Chōḷamaṇḍalam (S. I. I. II. 92). It seems that Mummadi is a case of the engraver's slip.

34. E. I. Vol V, pp 42-43. See also 'Kandalur Salai' p. 6. of Kavimani.
35. Travancore Archaeological Series, Vol. VI, p 188, and 266 of 1923.
36. Mysore Archaeological Report for 1917, P. 42.
37. Travancore Archaeological Series, Vol VI, p 6.
38. I. A. Vol. XX, p. 276.
39. Travancore Archaeological Series, III, p, 198.
40. E. I. Vol. XI, No 30.
41. A. R. E. 112 of 1905.
42. Travancore Archaeological Series IV, p. 136.
43. Ibid Vol. VI, p 8.
44. Ibid Vol. IV, pp 140-1.
45. A. R. E. 112 of 1905.
46. Nagam Aiya : State Manual, Vol. II, p. 377.
47. Shankunny Menon : History of Travancore : p. 92.
48. Mudaliar Manuscripts (Unpublished.)
49. Sewell's Historical Inscriptions, p. 112.
50. P. Sundaram Pillai : Some Early Sovereigns of Travancore : p. 21
51. Travancore Archaeological Series, Vol. I, p. 296.
52. Nagam Aiya : State Manual Vol. I, p. 265.
53. Travancore Archaeological Series I, p. 281.
54. Travancore Archaeological Series, VI, p. 28.

55. T. K. Velu Pillai: State Manual, Vol. II. p. 127.
56. Nagam Aiya: State Manual, Vol. I, p. 278.
57. *Achyutarāyābhūdayam*, Canto VI, Verses 29-31 and A. R. E. 1900 p. 27.
58. S. K. Aiyangar: The Sources of Vijayanagar p. 160.
59. A. R. E. 1937—38, p. 105.
60. Travancore Archaeological Series, Vol. VI, p. 125.
61. Fr. Heras: Aravidu Dynasty of Vijayanagar footnotes on pp. 144—47.
62. Tirupati Devasthanam Inscriptions Vol. V No. 158.
63. A. R. E. 17 of 1912.
64. S. K. Aiyangar: Sources of Vijayanagar History p. 16.
65. Fr. Heras: Aravidu Dynasty of Vijayanagar, Vol. I, p. 162.
66. R. Sathianathier: 'History of the Nayaks of Madura' p. 120.
67. *Ibid.* p. 121.
68. Quoted on by R. Sathianathier's 'History of Madura' p. 297.
69. T. K. Velu Pillai: State Manual: Vol. II, p. 192.
70. Travancore Archaeological Series, Vol. I, pp. 221-24.
71. O. A. Manuscripts, II, p. 215.
72. Nelson's 'Madura Manual' Part III pp. 226. ff.
73. Appendices in R. Sathianathier, 'History of the Nayaks of Madura.'
74. Travancore Archaeological Series, Vol. V, p. 210.
75. Translation of the resolution passed at Āśramam in M. E. 889 (A. D. 1714). Nagam Aiya: State Manual, Vol. I, p. 320.

76. Nelson : Madura State Manual, p. 256.
  77. Caldwell : History of Tinnevelly, p. 138.
  78. Shankunny Menon : History of Travancore p. 112.
  79. The views of certain writers including Vaiyapuri Pillai that *Tolkappiyam* appeared later than *Eṭṭutohai* is open to doubt.
  80. It is inexplicable why “*Sūdra*” is not used by Tolkappiyar. This shows the intermingling of the Aryan and Tamilian denominations.
  81. Ishwari Prasad : History of Medieval India p. 162.
  82. Travancore Archaeological Series Vol. I. p. 136. See also E. I. Vol. XXVI, No. 37.
  83. M. Arunachalam, ‘Education in Ancient Tamil Nāḍu’ p. 55. It was not true of Ancient Tamil Nāḍu and much less of medieval times. Secular education, irrespective of caste, is the gift of the British to Tamil Nāḍu as to the rest of India.
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## XXII Krishṇanvakaikkār

The Krishṇanvakaikkār, now living mostly in Kalkulam and Vilavancode Taluks of the Kanyakumari District in Tamil Nādu, constitute an interesting community, historically and socially. They speak a language which is a mixture of Tamil and Malayalam. Some of them are patrilineal while others are matrilineal. Widow remarriage is not uncommon. When a married man dies, if any one of his brothers is alive and is unmarried, he may take her to wife, even though younger than herself.

Regarding their origin and early history there is a legend. According to it the ancestors of the Krishṇanvakaikkār originally lived in Ambādi at Dvāraka, the sacred place of Krishṇa. They are said to have belonged to the Vaiśyakula Kshatriya community. It is believed that after Lord Krishṇa's time internecine quarrels among these people resulted in some of their families leaving Dvāraka with an idol of Lord Krishṇa and a 'Sālagrāma' and ultimately reaching Travancore. On their way from Dvāraka they are said to have stayed for a time at Kāñchipuram. They were called 'Āyar', and in the vicinity of Kāñchipuram there is even now a place called Āyarpādi.

Reaching Travancore, a little before the commencement of the Kollam Era, (A.D. 825) it is said, they received the royal patronage of the local king called Pallivāṇapperumāl. This monarch gave them the name 'Krishṇanvakaikkār' and settled them in Pālkūlaṅgara and Vañchiyūr in Trivandrum. The idol of Śrī Krishṇa, which they brought with them was enshrined within the precincts of the Padmanābhasvāmi temple at

Trivandrum. It is said that on the outer wall the East fort of the Śrī Padmanābhasvāmi temple at Trivandrum the names of the Gōtras of these 72 families have been inscribed and that at present 64 of them are clearly decipherable. The leaders of the Krishṇanvakaikkār were called 'Ananta Padmanābha Kshēṭra Pallavarāyar.<sup>1</sup>

The story goes that after some time the Brāhmaṇins attached to the Padmanābhasvāmi temple became jealous of the influence of the Krishṇanvakaikkār and instigated the ruler to expel them from Trivandrum. Thereupon, the king gave them permission to settle down in South Travancore between the 'Panni' river (Kulittura) and the Paraijāru near Paraśeri west of Nagercoil. It is this region which is now occupied by the Krishṇanvakaikkār.

There is also another tradition that they came down to the south from Dvāraka on account of the confusion in North India caused by the Muslim invasions. All these legends do not constitute history.

The facts that they were described as 'Āyar' and that they are found now mostly in the Kalkulam and Vilavancode taluks of the Kanyākumari District suggest their affinity with the Āy kings of old. We hear of Āy Aṇdiran, Titiyan and Atiyan in the Saṅgam classics. They were ruling in the region of the Potiyil hills, probably in the 1st century A.D.<sup>2</sup> Ptolemy (A.D. 140) speaks of the Āy kingdom as lying in present South Travancore. It is probable that, pressed by the Chēras, the Āys came down to the south by the 2nd century A.D.

We hear of them again from inscriptions of the 9th and 10th centuries A.D. Kōkkarunandadakkan and Varaguṇa were Āy kings of the Yādava caste who ruled in and around

Tiruviḍaikkōdu.<sup>3</sup> This region is the stronghold of the Krishṇanvakaikkār. It is very likely that the Krishṇanvakaikkār belonged to the old clan of Āys.

Probably the last of the Āys became a king of Vēṇād. 'Vēṇād' is derived from a conjunction of Vēl with Nād, and the Āys were known also as Āy Vēls.<sup>4</sup> In this connection it is significant to note that the Census Report of Travancore (1901, p. 334) states that a Niṭṭu or royal grant belonging to 5th Chiṅgam (Āvaṇi) (A.D. 825) engraved on a copper plate was granted to them. It is probable that the Āy king of Vēṇād granted certain privileges to the members of his community in the year when the Kollam Era was inaugurated.

Now let us have an idea of their social organisation, customs and manners. The population of the Krishṇanvakaikkār was 12,032 in 1931 and now it has risen to about 30,000. Though originally they were a pastoral community they became in due course a pre-eminently agricultural section. Education has not made notable progress among them, though, in recent times a number of men have taken to English education. The progress of women in the sphere of education is very poor. The people are typical of the backward villagers of Tamil Nādu.

As mentioned earlier, one section of the Krishṇanvakaikkār follows the Makkattāyi or patrilineal system, while another has adopted the Marumakkattāyam or matrilineal pattern of succession. Originally they were all Makkattāyis. It is not known definitely when a section became Marumakkattāyis. In all probability after the ascendancy of the Nambūdiris about the 8th century A.D. matriliney must have appeared gradually in Kēraḷa. In order to preserve their property undivided, the Nambūdiris adopted the practice of the eldest son alone marrying in the same caste. Naturally the others

took Kshatriya and Nayar women as concubines.<sup>5</sup> As a consequence the matrilineal system developed. The kings of Kēraḷa adopted the system and imposed it as a regular custom among Nāyars, Īlavās, Krishṇanvakaikkār and Nāñchinād Veṭṭālas.

*Religion :*

They are pre-eminently Vaishṇavites and particularly worshippers of Śrī Krishṇa. Each one of their villages has a temple dedicated to Śrī Krishṇa. In recent times there are temples of Subrahmaṇia, too. The famous Subrahmaṇia temple at Kumarakōyil is situated near the heart of the Krishṇanvakai settlements. On Fridays, and particularly on the last Friday of the month according to the Hindu calendar, throngs of people including the Krishṇanvakikkār visit and worship at this temple.

There are also temples dedicated to Māriamman in most of their villages. The common masses have a great faith in the worship of Māriamman. In the month of Kārtigai (November-December) there take place special pūjas in this temple for thirty days. During such occasions certain devotees get possessed and take to frenzied dances. Their utterances during the excited dances are often listened to by the people with eagerness and are believed to be the outcome of divine inspiration. Formerly animal sacrifices were common in the Māriamman shrines; but since 1922 they have been given up.

There are many devotees of Aiyappā. Some of the people undertake a pilgrimage to the celebrated shrine of Aiyappā at Sabarimalai. Among proper names given to people, many have affinity to Vishṇu and Krishṇa, some to Subrahmaṇia and Aiyappā.

### *Child Birth Ceremonies :*

The rituals and ceremonies conducted from the birth of a child till the death may now be considered. As in the case of other Hindu communities, among the Krishnanvakaikkārs, too, the birth of a male child is eagerly welcomed. However, when a child, boy or girl, is born, the women folk of the caste in the village visit the house and they join in raising a musical chorus with the tip of the tongue. This is done with notable enthusiasm if the baby is of the male sex. A purification ceremony takes place on a Wednesday or Saturday after 12 or 13 days subsequent to the delivery of the child. Immediately prior to it the white washing of the walls and cleaning of the house take place. On the day of purification the child is presented with ornaments by the near relatives and a feast for the relatives and the intimate friends of the family follows.

The first anniversary of the child's birth is celebrated with enthusiasm. On that occasion, there is a ceremony called 'Nūlketṭu' which is conducted in the family temple, if there is one, or in the common temple of the village. On this occasion, the near relatives of the child present it with ornaments of gold or silver. It is notable that these ornaments are of the same pattern as those believed to have been worn by Lord Krishṇa when he was a boy.

### *Puberty :*

The attainment of puberty of a girl is followed by some ceremonies. Intimation is given to relatives and friends in the neighbourhood. The village priest called 'Āśān' sprinkles some raw rice on the head of the girl seated in a room with a light in front of her and presents the purificatory oil with which she anoints herself. Soon after the women gather together, the girl is given a bath. Thereafter the girl is made

to sit in front of a full-blown coconut flower for a time. This is done each day till the 8th day. On the 8th day a ceremony takes place. Relatives and friends, particularly womenfolk visit the house. The girl is given a purificatory bath. She is presented with gifts of new cloth; among rich people gifts of ornaments are given. A feast follows. It is important to remember that the ceremony attached to puberty is now rarely celebrated. The rich, and even among them only a few, continue to celebrate it. The bath, feast and giving of presents are done in the presence of the nearest relatives only. It is notable that among the people of other communities this celebration, wherever it is performed, is done on the 13th or 15th day of the attainment of puberty.

#### *Marriage :*

Till about fifty years ago pre-puberty marriage and even child marriage was common. A girl eight or ten years was married to a man of about 20 years of age. But now it has changed and late marriages are generally in vogue. This is particularly so among the educated people.

In the matter of fixing up matches *gōtra* is not a criterion; on the other hand the amount of money paid by way of dowry, the status of the family and other considerations prevail.

Intermarriages are not permitted. Until recently one who intermarries was banished from the village. The relatives of the person who marries from another caste cut off their relations with him. In recent times, however, intercaste marriages take place occasionally. Intermarriages with Nāyars show a tendency to increase. Mostly intermarriages are cases of the men of the Krishṇavakai caste marrying girls of other communities.

*Betrothal :*

After the initial negotiations the parents of the bride and bridegroom meet the astrologer with the horoscopes of the bride and bridegroom. If found suitable the bride's father and uncle (mother's eldest brother) go to the bridegroom's house and make a formal proposal. After the terms are formally settled, there takes place the betrothal ceremony during which the two horoscopes are read out by the astrologer. Then, with the consent of the relatives of the bride and bridegroom, the astrologer ties together the two horoscopes. The auspicious dates for the various ceremonies, like the marriage, erection of the wedding altar and the wedding pandal or thatched shed are all fixed. At the betrothal there is no provision for the meeting of the bride and bridegroom. In fact, the two do not meet before the day of the wedding.

*Marriage ceremony :*

It is important to note that usually among the Krishnan-vakaikkār the marriage takes place in the house of the bridegroom, though in a few cases it is held in the house of the bride. On the day prior to the marriage the relatives of the bridegroom and bride meet in the respective houses of the bridegroom and bride and prepare for the ceremony. The next day at the appointed time the party of the bride starts in a procession to the house of the bridegroom.

On the marriage day the bride and bridegroom offer prayers to the family deities. It is the usual practice to have an image or a picture of Lord Krishṇa in the place where the marriage ceremony is held. Pūja is performed to this representation of Krishṇa.

At the wedding ceremony the girl's uncle (mother's brother) plays an important role. It is he who takes her to the wedding altar, the raised platform, and presides over the marriage ceremony. The practice of tying the marriage symbol (*Tāli*) by the bridegroom assisted by his sister is in vogue. Compared to that of certain other communities, the wedding ceremony among the Krishnanvakaikkār is simple. In cases of pre-puberty marriages, the nuptials used to take place on an auspicious day some time after the girl attains puberty.

Early in the morning of the marriage day the bridegroom must wash the feet of his mother. He receives then a garland of flowers from his mother with her blessings. It is interesting to observe that the bridegroom goes in state to the house of the bride, sword in hand. This is not a symbol of the martial tradition of the caste, because the Krishnanvakaikkār were never known to have played a part in warfare. Apparently it is only a symbol of manliness. The bride and her party arrive. Soon after this the bridegroom is led to the wedding hall where stands the wedding altar. A little before the wedding takes place the bride's brother washes the feet of the bridegroom, who in his turn presents him with a gold ring, or in modern times a wrist watch.

The marriage altar of wood would have been improvised near the entrance of the house. The bride's father or bridegroom's father, whoever comes from another place to the wedding gives a marriage fee to the village President. Arrears of taxes to the village also must be cleared. If the arrears to the village are not cleared, the villagers do not attend the function.

At the outset a plantain tree having a bunch of fruits is tied to a post of the dais. A branch of a tree called

the Muļju Murungai (*Erythrina Indica*) which has sharp thorns is tied to the plantain tree. This is said to signify that married life is the union of diverse tendencies and habits, symbolised by the union of the thorny tree with the smooth plantain tree. The bottom of the plantain tree is covered with clean mud. A tall lighted lamp of brass or silver-gilt (*Nila Viłakku*) is kept on the altar. This lamp is eventually given as a gift to the bride by her eldest uncle. On a plantain leaf there will be a measure full of paddy, betel leaves and arecanut and a symbolic representation of Gaṇēśa shaped out of cowdung.

At the outset the bride and bridegroom go round the wedding altar three times. The bridegroom's sister and brother-in-law accompany them. The wife of the bride's brother and the bride's sister lead them with a lighted hanging lamp. Then the bride and bridegroom take their seats facing east on a small raised platform on the marriage altar. The bride takes her seat to the left of the bridegroom, after which a small piece of iron fastened to a thread is tied to the right hand of the bridegroom and left hand of the bride. This is done under the belief that troubles from devils and ghosts could be warded off by the iron piece. Thereafter the bridegroom presents the bride her wedding clothes which she puts on.

For the second time the bride and bridegroom go round the altar. When they resume their seats on the plank they exchange garlands. After that the bridegroom ties a chain bearing the Tali (*Tirumāṅgalyam*) made of gold around her neck. At that time the piper plays his instrument loudly. The Tāli is believed to be the symbol of chastity and fidelity to her husband.<sup>6</sup> The married woman shoud always wear it around her neck. After another exchange of garlands between the bride and bridegroom, the bride's uncle (mother's brother)

recants the names of all the ancestors of both the parties and loudly proclaims that the daughter of such and such person of such and such a family is duly wedded to the boy of such and such a family. Then he pours some water on a palm-leaf held together by the bride and bridegroom. This really symbolises the *Kanyādānam* i.e. the giving of the girl in gift to the bridegroom. Formally this is taken to mean that the bride's uncle will provide property and gifts to the couple. Thereafter the couple receives the blessings and presents from the elders and relatives. The bride and bridegroom are given plantain fruit and milk. Then they go in procession to the village temple. This is followed by a feast.

After the marriage the bridegroom pays a formal visit to the house of the bride and it is a custom for the mother-in-law to give him some presents. On the third day of the marriage an interesting scene is enacted. Some members of the bride's party proceed to the bridegroom's house with apparent indignation. The efforts of the bridegroom's relatives to pacify them are fruitless. Then the bride's party returns to the bride's house even without partaking of the proffered hospitality. The significance of this farce seems to be a demonstration of pretended indignation that the bride has been taken away by the bridegroom.

On the 3rd day of the marriage the bride and bridegroom should sow the seeds of peas, paddy and other corns, altogether amounting to nine varieties in three earthen-ware cups. On the seventh day the germinated seeds are taken to the adjoining river or pond and dropped into the water. The germination of the seeds is believed to symbolise the birth of children to the newly wedded couple.

On the seventh day of the marriage there is a celebration which is described as the seventh day marriage. That day the bride serves food to the bridegroom at the wedding altar. Up to this day the bride and bridegroom are not to go out of the house. This injunction is rarely observed in modern times. After the celebration of the seventh day marriage, the altar at which the wedding took place, is to be removed.

It is important to remember that on occasions like marriage, the people of the village co-operate with those who celebrate them. In the erection of the pandal, conduct of the feast and in respect of the systematic adherence to the customary rites, the elders of the villages lend a helping hand. But in recent times the urbanised pattern of life has weakened the co-operation of the neighbours.

Seemantham takes place in the seventh month of pregnancy. The pregnant woman's parents and relatives go to her husband's house where a feast is held. After certain celebrations including the presentation of some money to the husband, the bride is taken to her parents' house. No separate celebration, known as 'Valakāppu', common among people of other communities, takes place among the Krishnanvākaikkār.

*Festivals*: The Krishnanvakaikkār celebrate all Hindu festivals like Dīpāvali, Poṅgal and Paṅguni Uttiram. The special festivals of the Malayalis like Vishu, Pūram and Ḏoram are also celebrated by them. Special festivals associated with Vishṇu, like Krishna Jayanti and Vaikuṇṭha Ekādaśi are held among them with marked enthusiasm.

*Superstitions and Omens*: There is a general belief in spirits, devils and supernatural powers. Sorcery and witchcraft are prevalent. There is a superstition regarding the occurrence of epidemics, such as small pox and cholera. The people

attribute these to the wrath of the Ambā]. Some deities like Māriamman and Maṭan are propitiated for recovery from illness. Devil dance is common. People attach importance to auspices like the sound of owls and lizards, at the time of the commencement of any important event.

*Funeral Ceremonies*: Children and youngsters up to about ten years of age are buried; the others are cremated. Cremation is usually done in the place allotted to particular families. Both the burial and burning are done with the dead body in a lying position. The pit for both burial and cremation is dug in the North-South direction. The head is always laid southward, facing north.

When a person's death is found to be certain, the hands and legs of the dead are tied and the eyes and mouth are closed. At the moment of death water from the Ganges is poured into the mouth; if that is not available, milk is used for the purpose.

When a person dies, his eldest son should cry aloud thereby announcing to the villagers that his father is dead. Soon after almost all the elder members of the village gather in the house of the dead. At the outset the son or any other close relation of the deceased should pay the customary dues to the village and when that is done the village President sends men to fetch the village barber. Thereafter intimation is given to the relatives of the deceased in the neighbouring villages and towns. The dead person's brothers, sisters and daughters must be present at the house at the funeral ceremony. His sons and daughters should make certain offerings, pay obeisance to the deceased and perform certain customary duties to the dead body, known as "Karma."

According to the prevalent custom, the relatives of the dead person arrive in the house, each bringing five or seven measures of paddy and a coconut. Barber women pound the paddy and get rice out of it. Some of the coconuts are cracked and mixed with the rice, which is used for putting into the mouth of the dead person later. The other coconuts are split and are used for lighting lamps made of fresh cloth and oil. These lamps are placed on the side of the dead body.

The corpse is washed with soap and sandalwood paste; in modern times scent is also applied to it. Then the body is dressed with new and costly clothes. Finally the corpse is covered with a long white cloth and on top of it a gaudy red cloth is spread.

A temporary shed is erected in front of the house and there the dead body is placed on a cot. On the sides of the dead body burning lamps are kept. If the dead person is a man, the wailing widow must be near the dead body. The women who come to attend the ceremony untie their hair as a sign of grief. They wail together, praising the dead person's virtues and beneficent deeds. Much of it is conventional. The songs appeal to God that the deceased should reach Kailāsa (Heaven). The account of Chitragupta is also narrated through songs in a graphic manner. Then all the women begin to cry, standing shoulder to shoulder, and slowly moving round and pointing to the corpse with their two hands, frequently beat their own breasts. Some pattern of traditional songs is repeated by them. It need hardly be added that modern young women fight shy of these traditional customs and do not fall in line with them. A few pious women read verses from the Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata and Gīta and other sacred literature in praise of Lord Krishna.

Before touching the dead body which is in the canopy in front of the house every one should take bath. The dead body is considered something sacred and obeisance to the dead body is expected of all. The eldest son leads with a copper vessel on his head, and the women are led by the dead person's eldest daughter. On their way to the tank again the women continue their wail. On return each one of the persons puts a handful of rice into the mouth of the dead person as a final offering. A few drops of water are also poured into the mouth. All the relatives do these as a duty which signifies affection and respect to the dead person. Those who put rice and pour a little water into the mouth of the dead person bow their heads before the corpse and worship it by prostrating before it. The final offer of the rice is done by the eldest daughter of the dead person.

Some of the near relatives of the dead person, after taking their bath, carry the corpse placed on a structure of bamboo poles. At the moment of the leaving of the party from the house there is loud wailing and lamentation of the womenfolk. The women, closely related to the dead person, kneel down and worship the body as it is taken out.

The funeral procession, consisting of relatives and friends, is led by the eldest son of the dead person. He carries on his head a copper vessel (*kindi*) with a long spout. The village barber carries fire in a mud pot. When the party reaches the burial ground, the corpse is taken out of the structure of bamboo poles and placed on the dried coconut shells which are already laid systematically on the burial pit.

At the burning ghat there take place certain rituals. At the outset a small portion of the cloth just above the mouth of the dead body is cut open. Then a long piece of white cloth cut out of a larger piece is spread over the corpse.

Over this white cloth again a red gaudy cloth is spread. A portion of the white cloth is worn by the dead person's eldest son who performs the *Karmāḍhi* or burial rites. Small sticks of tamarind tree are planted all around the corpse.

The male relatives of the dead offer one by one the remaining rice brought from the house. One by one they kneel down near the dead body, take a handful of rice and place it on the mouth of the dead and pour a little water. No ornament of any kind is to remain on the dead body; they are all removed and handed over to the relatives. However, walking sticks and other things frequently used by the dead person are kept by the side and burnt along with the corpse.

Soon after, the dead body is again covered by the cloths, white and red, and sandalwood is applied to the corpse below the surface of the cloth. Thereafter the pit is filled with firewood and above it a layer of coconut shells and husks is spread. It is covered on top by straw and above it mud is spread. Then the funeral pyre is lit by fire.

While the smoke begins to rise, the eldest son of the dead person goes around the pyre with a mud pot of water on his head. Then some one makes a hole on one part of the pot. In the second and third rounds he makes similar holes on the pot, and water flows in all directions from the holes. After the third round, the son who was carrying the pot flings it down near the head of the corpse. Then once again the relatives kneel down and offer a final worship to the dead person.

After cremation all the relatives return home. Four elders of the village sit on some plaited coconut leaves, a little farther off from the funeral pit. Three of the persons repeat what the eldest, invariably the President of the village,

says. First he mentions the name of the dead person, his or her age, the natal star, the date, year and star on which the death occurred. Then he proclaims that all the villagers and relatives have been informed. Next he spells out the ceremonies that remain to be performed. Some remuneration of money is given to the village barber, his wife and children and to the other servants who rendered help in the burial.

*Ceremonies on the third day:* On the 3rd day of the cremation some elders of the village and relatives of the deceased proceed to the burial ground and ascertain whether the corpse is burnt properly or not. In case it is not burnt fully, they see to it that some more firewood and coconut shell are added.

Near the burial pit a temporary shed is erected with green coconut leaves. It is a traditional belief that green coconut leaves should not be used except on this occasion.

Three coconuts are used to serve as an oven and the husk of coconut flowers is used to cook rice, peas, plantains and sesame all together. Then the sons of the deceased have their hair on the head completely shaved. The eldest son after bath wears that white piece of cloth which was cut from the cloth used for spreading over the dead body before the funeral. He enters the shed of thatched coconut leaves. Then he cooks the things on a hearth with the aid of dried coconut husks. After about half an hour he puts the cooked food on a plantain leaf. Next he carries the food having on his head the copper vessel which was carried by him on his head on the funeral day and moves to the nearest tank or river and deposits the food there.<sup>7</sup> The barbers are fed at the end of the ceremonies on the third day.

In the evening of the third day tender coconuts are placed in the shed made of green leaves in the belief that the dead person may drink the juice if he is in need of it. A lamp is kept burning in that shed.

At home the ladies wail thrice at night extolling the virtues and good deeds of the dead person. The daughters and daughters-in-law cry holding the four posts of the cot used during his or her life time. This daily routine is carried on without fail for ten days continuously.

On the tenth day all the relatives and villagers assemble in the same house in the early morning. At about 8 a.m. the temporary shed erected on the day of the death is removed. Then paddy is given to the village washerman and barber. It is notable that the paddy is measured in full with the paddy overflowing the unit of measure. Then the men of the village and the male relatives of the dead person proceed to the burial ground in a procession.

From the funeral pit burnt pieces of bones are collected and cleaned by water. Secondly they are cleaned by the cow's urine. Thereafter, they are successively cleaned by fresh water, coconut juice, milk and nowadays by scent. At last they are allowed to dry in the sunlight. Meanwhile, the grave is filled with sand which is shaped in the form of a sleeping person. Then the bones are brought on a plantain leaf and placed in the western direction. Each one of the persons assembled takes a piece of bone and places it with respect first in a big earthen pot and then in a smaller one. The elderly males put the bones three times, but the boys and girls are allowed to put the bones into these two pots only one time. It is considered as a sacred duty that all the kith and kin should place pieces of bones into these two pots because they believe that by carrying the burnt bones and immersing them

into the sea, the body of the dead mingles with the sea. These two pots are each tied with a white cleanly-washed cloth. Then the big pot is covered with a red cloth.

In the middle of the burial pit a tender coconut palm tree is planted. A thorny bush-like prickly-pear is placed by its side. It is the belief that if the dead person is a noble one, the coconut tree will grow up and will yield plenty of fruits ; if not, it will not grow. It is also a belief that the prickly-pear should not grow in the midst of cultivated fields or habitable regions. Then they sow seeds of five varieties of grains, paddy, cotton, sesame, green peas and black peas. The sowing is done with the heads of the seeds pointing downward. These are all ominous indications of the evil that had befallen the family.

Then the party returns to the house with the two pots containing the burnt bones. The eldest son of the deceased person should carry it on his cleanly shaven head. The party is led by the village barber who drags a spade as he walks along. In normal times the spade should not be drawn on the ground but carried in the hand or over the shoulder.

Several ceremonies take place in the house after the party reaches it. First the oldest woman member of the house places a grain of rice made of gold in the big pot. Other women and the girls place flowers ; and it must be noticed that certain flowers (like the *terri*) alone are used on this occasion. The women sing in a wailing tone particular songs with a peculiar melody and significance. Some of them read verses from the *Gīta* or *Rāmāyaṇa*. Eventually when the offer of worship to the bones is completed by every kith and kin of the deceased, the pot is tied with two clothes, first by a white one and then above it by a red one. All these rites are performed near the front door of the house

where the flooring would have been cleaned with cowdung. Then the pot is decorated with garlands. Finally a prayer is offered and incense is burnt. Then the eldest sister of the deceased takes the pot and places it on the head of the eldest son with much respect and intense feeling, because she is rendering a final homage to the dead person before the bones are cast to the seas. The other small pot is put near the house and kept for a year. After one year it is deposited into one or the other of the holy places like Kanyākumari, Kāśi and Rāmēśvaram. Alternatively it is deposited in sacred rivers like the Kāveri or the Ganges.

The men who carry the ashes of the dead go to that part of the sea which is called ‘Bali’s sea’ near the light-house at Muṭṭam. There they deposit the ash into the sea. All of them who go with the party take a bath in the sea. They give alms to the poor and eventually return home with one or two bottles of sea water.

The persons who return home after completing their traditional rites on the sea shore are received warmly. They sprinkle the sea water in all rooms of the house with the belief that it will clear all sins and purify the house.

The close relatives of the dead person present clothes to the sons and daughters of the deceased. It is a custom that they should wear those clothes. They are described as the “clothes of the dead”. At noon there is a feast. It is called the tenth day feast and the ceremony itself is known as the tenth day ceremony.

On the 16th and 41st days of the death, sweet delicacies (some of them are brought by the relatives) are served in a room when all people remain outside it under the belief that the dead may come and partake of these sweet foodstuffs.

On every month 'Balis' are offered on that particular day on which the star of the dead person's death falls. (Here Bali means not sacrifice but certain offerings). It is called 'Māsa Bali.' This must be done without fail.

On the anniversary day i.e. on the particular day in which the star of the day of death falls, the relatives bring sweet food of various kinds and they are placed in a room (dining hall) for five minutes with the belief that the dead person will come and partake of it. New clothes are hung at one corner of the house so that the dead may not go without clothes. When a child or any other member of the family suffers from physical or mental disease the orthodox people offer sweet food and fresh clothes to the dead. In these ways they respect their ancestors and they believe that the dead will protect them in the form of devils and angels. But the educated people of modern times generally have no faith in these ideas and practices. Now certain conventional formalities alone are observed.

#### *Pollution:*

For 41 days after death pollution is observed. During those days the relatives of the dead should not go to temples, and should not attend weddings or other ceremonies. The sons and daughters of the dead should follow this restriction for one year in memory of the deceased person.

Purification can be had only after immersing the remaining ashes of the dead in the holy sea and after the "year Bali" (annual Bali) with the help of a brahmin who receives rice, vessels, vegetables and other accessories. Then they sprinkle sea water brought from the holy sea for purification. They call for a brāhmaṇ priest and make him perform some pūjas of purification. Thus the purification is over.

*Periodical ceremonies after death :*

Monthly *bali*s take place when they make offerings of five grains and banana fruits and other food-stuffs to the dead in the morning and get them immersed in a stream, river, sea or tank nearby. These must be done on the particular star of the death day and must be continued for one year. Then every year the same *bali* is continued on the anniversary of the day of death.<sup>8</sup>

### NOTES

1. This has led some to imagine that the Krishpanvakaikkār had been associated with the Pallavas. But the title 'Pallavarāyar' was not confined to the Pallavas. Some Chōla chieftains also bore this title.
2. *Purananūju*: 130 to 132. Titiyan is described as 'Potiyir Chelvan' *Aham*: 25 : line 20. Ilamkulam Kunjan Pillai thinks that they ruled there in the 5th century A.D. This is based on his dating the Sangam age later, which is not valid.
3. Travancore Archaeological Series, Vol. I, sections I & II. Perhaps Tiruvattār, Vilīñam and Kōttār were capitals of these later Āy kings in different periods of time.
4. "It is learnt from later inscriptions that all the ruling chieftains south of Tiruvalla were Yādavas. There are reasons to believe that the Yādava family at Trippāppūr, near Trivandrum, which claimed ownership of the Sri Padmanābhasvāmy temple, was successor to the family of Karupandaṭakkan and other Āy Kings. By about the 12th century, this Trippāppūr family, the Keezhaperoor family of Vēpād and the Chiravāi family at Athenthuruthi near Tiruvalla, were all united into one."

Ilamkulam N. Kunjan Pillai: 'Studies in Kerala History' p. 182.

It is an open question whether the Narkuṭi Vejjājar and Kōṭṭai Vejjājar of the Tirunelveli District, who claim descent from Irunkōvēl and who are said to have sojourned at Dvāraka previously, were related to the Krishṇavakaikkār. All of these claim association with the Yādavas. But the Narkuṭi and Kōṭṭai Vejjājar are worshippers of S'iva, while the Krishṇavakaikkār are worshippers of Krishṇa.

5. The Chōla-Chēra war of the 11th century A.D. necessitating the absence of Kshatriyas and Nayars from their homes, was a contributory factor; but its role should not be exaggerated as has been done by Ilamkulam Kunjan Pillai.
  6. However, the *tāli* is not removed on the husband's death.
  7. It is a traditional inhibition among the Krishṇavakaikkār that they should not have the hair on the head shaved or carry on their head, any copper, brass or bronze vessel except on funeral occasions.
  8. I am indebted to Thiru A. Govinda Pillai, Professor of History, Periyar E.V.R. College, Tiruchirappalli, for details furnished to me, regarding the customs of the Krishṇavakaikkār.
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## XXIII Relations Between the East India Company and Bengal (1634-1764)

The student of the history of relations between the East India Company and Bengal in the period of 1634-1764 may ask the question whether the principles of the law of nations were applied in these relations or whether they were simply governed by the primordial 'law of survival' as prevailing in power politics. A brief examination of the transactions of the East India Company with the Moghul Emperor and his vassal, the Subedhār of Bengal, may provide an answer to this question.

The English East India Company commenced their commercial activities in Bengal on the authority of the *firman* (the official document recording the privileges) which they obtained from the Moghul Emperor. This *firman* of 1634, which was granted by Shah Jahan, permitted the English to carry on trade on the condition of payment of an annual *peshkush* (tribute) of Rs. 3,000. Consequently the understanding was that the Company was to be exempted from the need to pay inland duties.<sup>1</sup> This was a substantial privilege particularly in Bengal since the saltpetre, sugar, silk and cotton yarn which the Company purchased from the interior districts had to be transported over a long distance passing through several barriers before they could reach the harbour. But the local officials, more often than not, disregarded the *firman* and insisted on the payment of the inland duties. When the Company's servants found appeals to the Subedhār ineffective, they resorted to the practice of bribing or offering 'presents' to the officials in

order to overcome their opposition. It is important to observe that this state of affairs prevailed even before the disintegration of the Moghul Empire commenced.

In 1651 Shah Shuja, the governor of Bengal and the son of Shah Jahan, granted a *firman* to the Company on the same condition of an annual payment of Rs. 3,000. In all probability the old trouble from the local officials recurred, for Shah Shuja was obliged to give the Company an assurance in 1656 that 'the factory of the English Company be no more troubled with demands of customs for goods imported or exported either by land or by water, nor that their goods be opened and forced from them at underrates in any places of government by which they shall pass and repass up and down the country; but that they buy and sell freely and without impediment.'<sup>2</sup> These terms were acted upon for a time, and the improved position contributed to a marked development of English trade. However, the Company's servants did not by any means give up their old practice of corrupting the local officials, because in their own private trade they wished to enjoy all the commercial privileges which the Company as a corporate body had acquired. Obviously this collusion was as unlawful on the part of the English merchants of the Company as that of the Subedhār's officials.

After Shah Shuja left Bengal in 1658 to participate in the war of succession, another difficulty arose, for his successor refused to recognise his agreement with the Company. This was manifestly unjust, for Shah Shuja's *firman* as well as the assurance of 1655 had been guaranteed by him not in his personal capacity but as the Subedhār, the representative of the Emperor. Attempts on the part of the English to obtain an imperial *firman* proved unsuccessful

because of the confusion which prevailed in the capital over the succession issue, and the local officials made the best of the opportunity by freely accepting illegal gratification. This corrupt atmosphere was made still more intolerable when Mir Jumla, the Viceroy of Bengal from 1660 to 1663, was himself a party to the violation of the law, for he had private commercial interests and frequently availed himself of the services of the English and their ships to transport his goods to Persia. Besides, he had invested an enormous sum of money with the English Company in business transactions and disputes arose over their settlement.<sup>8</sup> The cumulative effect of all this was that the law of the land had become inoperative.

The position did not materially improve in 1678 when Shaista Khan, the governor, issued a *nishan* (signed permit) with the approval of the Emperor, granting the Company specific exemption from duties. But it was speedily violated, and once again, 'presents' came to the rescue. Nor did the position improve when Aurangzeb himself issued a *firman* in 1680 prohibiting the levy of all unlawful impositions for the wording of this *firman* was ambiguous and the parties concerned interpreted its provisions differently. While the Company's servants held that the *firman* had exempted them from the 3½% duties 'on all their goods on account of custom or poll money,' the officials of the Subedhār insisted on the payment of these duties. Obviously, the lack of coordination between the authorities who made the laws and those who interpreted and executed them was a source of endless trouble. To speak of the operation of the law between Bengal and the Company in these circumstances is an abuse of terms. In reality, might was right. The officials of Bengal found it easy to enforce the illegal exactions by threatening to stop the boats which carried the Company's

goods down the Ganges or by preventing the Indian merchants from selling the required commodities to the English. In fact both these threats were occasionally carried out, and the Company, after having tried their best to accommodate themselves to the situation, were themselves eventually compelled to resort to force.

Impelled by the courage of despair, the Company began to adopt the policy which had been commended earlier by Gerald Aungier, the Governor of Bombay, to the Directors. 'Justice and necessity of your estate now require,' he had written to the Court of Directors, 'that in violent distempers, violent cures are only successful; that the times now require you to manage your general commerce with your sword in your hands.'<sup>5</sup> Thus, having decided to defend themselves by force, the Company in Bengal began to fortify their settlement at Hughli. Naturally hostilities broke out, and though the English were repulsed from Hughli for a time, they later gained, by the peace concluded with Aurangzeb in 1690, permission to return and also to construct a factory at Satanuti. It is well to remember that Aurangzeb conceded these terms primarily because he felt that the British could intercept the trade between India and the coasts of the Arabian Sea and what was more, could obstruct the passage of pilgrims to Mecca. When, however, a local zamindar, Sobha Singh, rebelled, the English used it as a pretext to fortify their new factory, and thenceforth their strength increased.

Later in 1716, the British obtained a fresh *firman* from the Emperor Farrukhsiyar. This recognised all the privileges hitherto granted to the English since the reign of Shah Jahan and unequivocally gave them exemption from customs duties. 'That all goods and necessaries which their factors of the Subhaships, ports and round about bring or carry

away either by land or water, know they are custom-free that they may buy or sell at their pleasure."<sup>6</sup> This was hailed by the English in their country and in India as a great boon, though Orme, the historian, overestimated its importance by describing it as the Magna Carta of the English trade in India. Again the question is whether or not the provisions of the charter were enforced.

Murshid Kuli Khan, the Subedhār of Bengal, who by no means viewed the *firman* with favour, began openly to violate its provisions of the charter. No doubt, as guaranteed by the *firman*, the *dastaks* (passports) issued by the Company were recognised. But difficulties arose regarding the category of goods to which the *dastaks* were applicable. Since the *firman* had not specified the articles of trade, the English claimed that the privilege extended to all kinds of commodities. The Nawab Subedhār, on the other hand, insisted that the *dastaks* were intended to cover only such goods as were imported or purchased for export by sea.

But the English merchants were not free from blame either. They abused their existing privileges by selling *dastaks* to Indian merchants, making a large income out of these illegal transactions. The abuse of *dastaks* was a source of endless dispute between the Nawab's government and the Company. Besides, there was another source of trouble. The *firman* of 1716 had empowered the English Company to purchase 38 villages in the neighbourhood of Calcutta 'from the respective owners with the permission of Diwan Subah.' Murshid Kuli Khan found in this his opportunity to adopt a vindictive policy towards the Company, and he thwarted all their efforts to purchase the villages. Undaunted, the English resorted to indirect and dubious means. Some of the villages were purchased by the Company's brokers, and what was worse, a series of spurious transfers of

ownership of other villages followed which caused later a great confusion in the collection of revenue.'

Murshid Kuli Khan's successor, Shuja Khan (1727-39), also availed himself of all opportunities to fleece the Company. The English complained to the Emperor against 'the daily growing abuses of the new Viceroy,' but it was of no avail. Meanwhile, the hostility of Fatechand, the powerful banker of Bengal, towards the Company brought fresh troubles, and once he stopped the sale of English bullion and brought about a deadlock in their trade. It was realised soon that even the Subedhar Nawab could do little to help the Company against Fatechand. Eventually Fatechand was won over by the English through a respectable present of money.

Meanwhile, a petty quarrel among the English and some labourers resulted in the death of two Indians. Consequently the Nawab called upon the English to pay a considerable amount of money covering customs on their trade for all the years since the date of Farrukhsiar's *firman*, and also ordered the stopping of English trade at Dacca. Negotiations commenced through the wily Fatechand. And again, 'presents' patched up matters and restored the *status quo*. In 1732, Shuja Khan was guilty of double-dealing with the English. Having obtained a handsome present of money from the Company and assured them of friendly relationship, Shuja Khan counselled the Emperor against them on the ground that the English merchants were indulging in slave trade as well as in unauthorised private trade.

Shuja Khan's death in 1739 was followed by the succession of his son Sarfaraz Khan as the viceroy of Bengal. His demand of a special present from the English on his assumption of office forms an illuminating commentary on the interstate law, which is claimed to have regulated the relations

between Bengal and the Company which exercised certain sovereign powers. The English proposed to pay the customary present, which they had paid his father on his accession. But the new Nawab put up the strange plea that the Bengal government had to incur heavy expenditure in connection with the defence of the land against the threat of Nadir Shah's invasion and that since the English had also benefited by the security thus provided, they should pay a larger amount. The additional expenditure, stated to have been incurred, was itself open to doubt. That apart, it looks unreasonable that others should be called upon to share it. The worst of it was that the amount was not to be paid to the Government but as a personal present to the Nizam. The English, however, refused to meet the demand primarily because their position had become stronger, while that of the Nawab had deteriorated.

Āli Vardi Khan, who had manoeuvred to set aside Sarfarāz Khan and become the Nawab in 1740, was shrewd enough to realize the strong position of the English. While he avoided any open conflict with the Company, he was painfully aware of the potential danger from the English. Till his death in 1756 he continued generally the policy of his predecessors towards the Company, but there was a vague feeling of distrust on both sides. Both the parties were conscious of the mutual benefits they obtained, and therefore, they managed to follow a policy of 'give and take.'

Matters took a new turn with the accession of Sirājuddaulāh as the Subedhār of Bengal in 1756. As often happens, hostilities began on account of mutual fear and suspicion. Sirājuddaulāh was alarmed at the power of the Europeans in South Bengal and he wanted to act before it was too late. His suspicious attitude in its turn, created

uneasiness among the British as recorded by Holwell, the governor of Calcutta.<sup>9</sup> Then followed Sirājuddaulāh's attack on Calcutta and the Black Hole tragedy.<sup>10</sup> When Clive brought a force from Madras and defeated Sirājuddaulāh, the latter concluded a treaty with the English by which he promised to redress all their grievances and restore to them their factories and settlements. In fact it gave more favourable terms to the English trade than before.

But almost from the moment that the treaty was concluded Sirājuddaulāh appears to have been conspiring to renew his attacks on the Company. From the outset he failed to carry out the terms of the treaty. When shortly afterwards the Seven Year's War broke out and consequently Clive attacked Chandernāgōre, Sirājuddaulah lost no time in rendering help to the French.

The real turn of affairs came when some of Sirājuddaulāh's officers headed by Mīr Jāffar formed a conspiracy in collusion with certain Muslim nobles and Hindu financiers in order to overthrow the Nawab. Then occurred the discreditable intrigue between Mīr Jaffar and Watts, the agent of the Company at Kāssimbazar. Mīr Jāffar concluded a treaty with Clive, Col. Drake and Watts promising all privileges if the British would help him to become the Nawab. The Omichand affair and Clive's unscrupulous audacity connected with it are well known. Things shaped themselves just as the conspirators wished. Clive and several of his British collaborators obtained special presents from Mīr Jāffar when he became the Nawab. Besides the amounts specified in the treaty, Mīr Jāffar gave enormous sums of money to the leading members of the Company. The Select Committee of 1772 estimated the total amount of these gifts at about £ 1,250,000 of which Clive had received £ 234,000.<sup>11</sup> But it is well to

remember that these represent only the gifts 'proved and acknowledged.' How much more had passed otherwise, is not definitely known.

However, this was but the beginning of another chapter in the history of the relations between Bengal and the Company. Mīr Jāffar was not able to keep the servants of the Company under restraint, who gave themselves up to a relentless pursuit of private profit. As he found his position weak and miserable, it was not unnatural that he conspired to obtain deliverance from the English. His negotiations with the Dutch in order to achieve this object are disclosed by Vānsittārt.<sup>12</sup>

Subsequent developments occurred rapidly. The English decided to displace the incompetent Mīr Jāffar by his son-in-law Mīr Kāsim with whom a treaty was promptly concluded. 'Betwixt us and Mīr Mahamad Kāsim Khān Bahadūr a firm friendship and union is established; his enemies are our enemies and his friends are our friends.'<sup>13</sup> But soon he and his friends became the enemies of the English, merely because Mīr Kāsim wanted to be just and impartial.

The responsibility for the breach with Mīr Kāsim and for the non-observance of the treaty lay entirely with the English.<sup>14</sup> Mīr Kāsim was efficient, and he effected a marked improvement in the administration of his dominion. But the members of the Calcutta Council, having tasted the perquisites and illegal gratifications of Mīr Jaffar, disliked the strong-willed Mīr Kāsim from the outset. Their private trade was not allowed the special exemptions which they had received under the rule of Mīr Jāffar. Mīr Kāsim wrote in one of his letters to the Governor: 'All my forbearance has been owing entirely to the friendship between you and me. If the English *gomastas* will carry on their trade according to

the custom practised by other merchants, it is well. If not I have no resource but to make use, as you do, of expressions tending to dissolve our friendship.<sup>15</sup> This plea for the observance of the custom practised by other merchants is really a plea for the observance of the 'law of nations'; but it was a cry in the wilderness, and what was worse, it led to the ruin of this champion of the rule of law. Driven to despair and open warfare by the conduct of the English officers and servants, Mīr Kāsim ordered the murder of his English prisoners and war was declared, which led to the fateful battle of Buxār. The sovereignty of the British over Bengal, Bihar and Orissa was established. The entire history of the Company in Bengal until 1764 is a picture of ruthless power politics. Though negotiation was used as a means of settling disputes, and though treaties were actually concluded, the principles of the law of peace were not allowed to play their proper part in the execution of mutual arrangements. The reason was undoubtedly lack of goodwill between the contracting parties, but it was also due to the weakness of the disintegrating Moghul Empire whose decrees and engagements were less capable of enforcement.

## **N O T E S**

1. Orme, History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan, Vol. II, p. 8.
  2. W. Foster, English Factories, 1655-60, I, p. iii.
  3. John Bruce, Annals of the East India Company, Vol, I, p. 560.
  4. C. R. Wilson, The Early Annals of the English in Bengal, Vol. I, p. 79.
  5. India Office Original Correspondence, Vol. 37, No. p. 8, 4528.
  6. C. R. Wilson: The Early Annals of the English in Bengal, Vol. II, part ii, p. 48.
  7. The Census of India Report, 1901, Vol. VII, Part I, P. 24.
  8. S. C. Hill, Bengal in 1756-7, Vol. I, Intro., p. xxxiii.
  9. S. C. Hill, Bengal in 1776-7, Vol. II, p. 15.
  10. Now the authenticity of the accounts of Holwell and of the French Governor at Chandernāgōre is not doubted. The possibility of exaggeration of details does not discredit the truth of the event. See Cambridge History of India, Vol. V, p. 156, note.
  11. Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons, III, p. 311.
  12. Vansittārt's Narrative of the Transactions in Bengal, 1760-64, I, p. 46.
  13. Aitchison, Treaties and Sanads (4th Edn.) I, p. 214.
  14. Vansittārt's Narrative, III, p. 382.
  15. Ibid, p. 57.
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## XXIV. Schwartz and the Maratha Kings of Tanjavur

Though there have appeared in South India more famous missionaries than Schwartz himself, what distinguishes him from the rest of his class is his intimate association with the political powers of his day. In particular, his contact with the Maratha kings of Tanjavur and his involvement in their affairs arose not out of his deliberate choice, but rather by the force of circumstances. A brief survey of his career will illustrate this.

Born on 8th October, 1726, in the Electorate of Brandenburg, he received a sound education and in particular acquired a basic knowledge of Latin, Greek and Hebrew. At the University he came under the inspiring influence of Professor Francke, a profoundly religious person, and it was this contact which eventually led to the assumption of missionary work in South India by Schwartz.

Arriving at Tranquebar in 1750,<sup>1</sup> he spent sometime there learning Tamil and subsequently he acquired a knowledge of Persian and Hindustani. In 1767 he decided to make Tiruchirappalli his centre of work and for the next three years he laboured hard there. By his selfless devotion and pleasing manners he won the hearts of the local missionaries, and while at Tiruchirappalli he learnt the English language.

It was in April 1769 that his first contact with Tanjavur occurred. The ancient kingdom of Tanjavur was then under the rule of Tulsi, more familiarly known as Tuljajee. Schwartz

interviewed the king and was impressed by the king's affability and frankness. Tuljajee was then in the prime of his life. He was a Sanskrit scholar and a patron of Telugu and Marathi writers.

From the outset Schwartz took a fancy to the ruler and tried to impress him with the teachings of Christianity. Tuljajee in his turn appeared to be attracted by the new religion as well as its doctrines. But it is difficult to state whether it was the deep conviction of Tuljajee that was responsible for his attitude. It is not unlikely that it was the curiosity of an open mind, as perhaps in the case of Akbar in the north, that induced the missionary fondly to imagine that the conversion was likely to follow. However, like many other missionaries who had laboured in South India, Schwartz, too, thought that the Brähmin influence in society and in the royal court was the real obstacle to his success. There were several occasions when Brähmin theologians discussed the religious principles and practices with Schwartz. But like several missionaries, Schwartz, too, oversimplified the matter by condemning idol worship and describing the Hindus by the contemptuous term 'heathens' who worshipped images. It has not been possible for Schwartz and for men of his ilk to understand that Hinduism is something more than the popular worship of images.

It was, however, in the political field that Schwartz was able to provide some relief for Tuljajee. Tanjavur was frequently in trouble in those unsettled times. The Nawab of the Carnatic pressed his claims and the English supported him against Tuljajee. The city of Tanjavur was garrisoned by 8,000 of the Carnatic troops. For three years (1773-76) the people were subjected to severe suffering.<sup>2</sup> Schwartz who was warmly attached to Tuljajee felt sorry for him, but

realized that his incompetence deserved this sad fate. Fortunately at that time peace was made; but the king continued to lead a luxurious and dissipated life.

In a short while danger to the south from the ambitious activities of Hyder Ali appeared. Tanjavur, like the rest of South India, was in peril. In 1779, the Governor of Madras sent Schwartz on a mission to Hyder Ali in order to know his real object. It is not stated anywhere why Schwartz was chosen for this delicate purpose. Apparently a missionary was above board, and particularly a German missionary at that. Moreover, Schwartz was a competent person, conversant with several languages. These factors must have weighed with the Governor of Madras in selecting him for the difficult task. The purpose of the interview, however, was not successful. Hyder Ali was too astute to reveal his innate object or the methods he proposed to adopt for achieving his aim. Schwartz has, however, given an elaborate description of Hyder Ali, his palace, and his cruel system of judicial administration.

After Hyder Ali died in 1782, Tipu, his son, succeeded him. Tipu attacked and reduced Tanjavur. Schwartz records the abduction of 12,000 children by Tipu as late as 1784<sup>3</sup>. Now, the Governor of Madras asked Schwartz to negotiate with Tipu as well. This yielded a temporary success, because for a time, he did not pursue hostilities in the South.

During the period that Schwartz was away in Mysore (i.e 1779-82) the Tanjavur affairs had fallen into confusion. The people were almost on the point of rebellion. While the Rāja exacted heavy taxes from the people he was not able to meet his dues to the Government of Madras. Out of consideration for Tuljajee Schwartz wrote to the Governor of Madras pleading for some sympathy.

But the people had completely lost confidence in Tuljajee and, therefore, threatened to migrate to other regions. The Rāja appealed to Schwartz to intervene on his behalf, and thanks to his personal influence, about 7,000 of these emigrants returned again to their homes.

It was now that Tuljajee adopted a relative of his because he was himself childless. This relative was Serfojee and Tuljajee requested Schwartz to be his guardian. Schwartz however, induced Tuljajee's brother, Amar Singh, to be the guardian.

But Amar Singh proved to be selfish and unscrupulous.<sup>4</sup> He began to intrigue against Serfojee, the proper heir. These complications necessitated the visit of the Madras Governor to Tanjavur. After consulting some *Pandits*, he declared the adoption of Serfojee invalid and proclaimed Amar Singh as the legal successor of Tuljajee. This was most ununderstandable, and Schwartz interceded in the affair with righteous indignation.

Amar Singh was incompetent; moreover, he fell under the evil influence of an unscrupulous adviser. Schwartz promptly reported this state of affairs to the Government at Madras, and it was decided to administer the state with the help of Schwartz and Petrie, a Commissioner appointed by the Government. This Committee in the first instance protested vehemently against the confinement of the boy Serfojee in an unwholesome cell.

Schwartz afterwards wrote a long report to the Council at Madras, describing vividly the corrupt condition of the Government at Tanjavur and urging that the boy be placed

In a better condition and that he should be better educated. The document also indicated the lines of judicial reorganisation badly needed in Tanjavour.

It is incredible how in spite of the incompetence and wickedness of Amar Singh, he was allowed to continue on the throne of Tanjavour for four more years. By this time practically a state of anarchy prevailed.

Although the rights of Serfojee were delayed, his friend Schwartz, realising that the life of the young prince was in danger, obtained permission to take him and the two widows away to Madras and on 10th January 1793, they were taken to a place of safety under the leadership of Schwartz.

Perhaps it was at his suggestion that Serfojee and the widows of Tuljajee appealed to Lord Cornwallis against ill-treatment at the hands of Amar Singh. Now, the Madras Government mysteriously reconsidered its old decision on the question of adoption and approved Serfojee's legitimacy to succeed Tuljajee. Amar Singh quietly resigned himself to the inevitable.

The question arises as to why Schwartz evinced such a keen interest in the affairs of the royal family of Tanjavour. There is no denying the fact that Schwartz had high hopes of converting both Tuljajee and Serfojee. But it would be unfair to him to ascribe this as the sole motive. He must have realised at some stage that there was no hope of converting them; yet he continued to evince a friendly interest and earnest solicitude in their welfare. This speaks high of his outlook and character.

## N O T E S

1. For an account of the Tranquebar Mission by the Society for promoting Christian knowledge and the introduction of Christianity in Tanjavur in the 18th century, see *Memoirs of C. F. Schwartz*, pp. 11-53.
  2. Pearson: *Memoirs of Schwartz*, Vol. I, p. 304.
  3. Pearson: *Memoirs of Schwartz*, Vol. II, p. 23.
  4. K. R. Subramanian: *The Maratha Rajas of Tanjore*, p. 70.
  5. Jesse Page: *Schwartz of Tanjore*, p. 151. See also Bishop Heber's estimate, *Ibid*, p. 185 and pp. 191-2.
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## **XXV. Warren Hastings and Lord Macartney**

*More a theoretician than a practical administrator, Macartney failed to see things in the proper perspective and in addition lacked adaptability*

Warren Hastings was the Governor-General of Bengal from 1774 to 1785 and Macartney was the Governor of Madras from 1781 to 1785. According to the Regulating Act of 1773, the Governor-General of Bengal was to have supervisory authority over the other two Presidencies.<sup>1</sup> Naturally therefore, the two personalities had to be in contact with each other on administrative affairs.

Warren Hastings was a person of remarkable capacity, and it is not a little surprising that he overcame fairly well the formidable difficulties he had to encounter in the discharge of his duties, first as Governor (1772-74) and then as Governor-General of Bengal (1774-85). Macartney, too, was energetic, upright and learned. His letters reveal his scholarship and his elegant style of English language. But it is doubtful whether in the discharge of his responsibilities as Governor of Madras he brought to bear the required practical ability and shrewdness. At times he failed to anticipate the difficulties in the execution of his policies. Not infrequently he could not adjust himself with his collaborators and subordinates. His differences with Warren Hastings, Sir Eyre Coote, General Stuart and others reveal his lack of adaptability and of the capacity to get things done even by persons whom he disliked. In this paper we shall examine the differences he had with Warren Hastings.

Soon after Macartney's assumption of office as Governor of Madras there arose a friction with Hastings on the question of the continuance of the conflict with the Dutch

in South India. Since war with the Dutch had been declared by the British Government at home, Macartney ordered the attack of the Dutch settlements in South India and Ceylon. Nagapatnam was seized and it was followed by the capture of Trincomali in Ceylon which was in Dutch hands at the time. Warren Hastings, on the other hand, wanted a cessation of hostilities and an alliance with the Dutch so that they could influence the Nawab of the Carnatic to cede the region of Tirunelveli to the English. But Macartney had to obey the orders of the Home authorities who had urged the continuance of the war with the Dutch. Though the British Colonel Braithwaite was defeated by the Dutch in February 1782, the Dutch were not in a position to continue the conflict. Their naval power was inadequate to meet the needs of the situation in India. However, the war with the Dutch was responsible for a misunderstanding between Hastings and Macartney. It appears from an assessment of the conditions in South India at the time that the view of Hastings was the correct one and Macartney, instead of sticking to the allegiance of the Home authorities, should have adopted the course suggested by the Governor-General and explained the position to the Home authorities later.

A more complicated and prolonged misunderstanding arose out of the war with Mysore. The second Mysore war had begun, and Haidar Ali, in combination with the Nizam, the Marathas and the French, operated against the English. Soon the diplomacy of Hastings separated the Nizam and the Marathas from Haidar. The Madras Government made an appeal to Calcutta, and Hastings sent Sir Eyre Coote as the Commander-in-Chief. Coote came and relieved certain places like Wandiwash and won a victory at Porto Novo over Haidar in July 1781. Macartney had landed in India on 22nd June, 1781, and Haidar was

still powerful, having overrun the Carnatic up to the walls of Madras. It was at this critical juncture that Macartney began to quarrel with Coote over the question of the military command in the Carnatic. Macartney found Coote entrusted with the complete control of the conduct of the war, and in the view of the Governor, this amounted to an infringement upon the authority of the civil power. Macartney went to the extent of interfering in the military conduct of the campaign while Coote was absent in the field. Coote protested and complained to Bengal. Coote, for one thing, had no concern for financial considerations.<sup>2</sup> His army was encumbered with an enormous train of camp followers. Certainly he was not right in his allegation that Madras was not doing enough in the matter of supplies. Coote even threatened to resign; he was notorious for his choleric temperament, and he was quarrelsome to the core.<sup>3</sup> Hastings, however, mindful of the need of the hour, recommended that Madras should give full powers to Coote. Though Macartney agreed to it, his letters show how he found it difficult to work with his unbending colleague.<sup>4</sup>

In August 1781, there was another engagement of the English with Haidar at Polilur, but it was indecisive. Coote abandoned all hope of a decisive victory over Haidar and even contemplated resignation of his office, but was persuaded against that course by Macartney. In order to relieve Vellore which was besieged by Haidar, Coote fought at Sholinghur in September and inflicted substantial losses on the enemy. But in February 1782 Braithwaite was defeated near Kumbakonam and taken prisoner by Tipu.

Haidar died in December 1782. Tipu made a mistake in concentrating on the west coast neglecting the east. In spite of Macartney's suggestion, General Stuart, Coote's

successor, did not take advantage of the situation in the Carnatic, which left the Mysore army without a leader for four weeks. Macartney is to be blamed for his remissness on this occasion. The result was that the termination of the Second Mysore war was postponed by more than a year, and the English had to be content with less favourable terms than would have been the case otherwise. In fact there was a stage when, if the English had been sufficiently enterprising and vigorous, they could have attacked Seringapatam and dictated peace within its walls.

Even some victories won by the English were not turned to good account. General Fullarton raided Mysore from the south-west. In November 1733, he captured Palghat and occupied Coimbatore. He was actually advancing to Seringapatam, the capital of Tipu, when Macartney recalled him on the ground that he was negotiating for peace. This was a sad blunder on the part of Macartney. In fact, he ignored the instructions of Warren Hastings and the Commissioners regarding the steps to be undertaken for negotiating a peace with Tipu. Hastings thought that the honourable way to peace was to proceed with the war until Tipu volunteered for a peace settlement.<sup>5</sup> This was not to be. Macartney continued his own line of action and concluded the Treaty of Mangalore (1784) on the basis of mutual restitution of conquests. The shrewd Tipu treated the envoys with studied disrespect and made it appear that the English had anxiously solicited peace; the Madras Government strengthened this impression by its submissive meekness in the conduct of negotiations.

Hastings was furious with Macartney because the treaty of Mangalore ignored Salbai and this gave offence to Mahadaji Sindhia. Another grievance of Hastings was that the Nawab of the Carnatic had not been made a party to the treaty.

Though Hastings disapproved the terms of the treaty and tried to amend them, his efforts had no effect. Tipu had ratified the treaty, and Macartney refused to make any alteration in the terms.

In connection with the second Mysore war there arose another source of bickering between Hastings and Macartney. Soon after the arrival of Macartney, Hastings had written to him that the Rāja of Tanjore should be called upon, if necessary, to contribute his share to the cost of the war with Haidar. Macartney agreed to this completely, and accordingly forwarded an extract from Hastings' letter to the Chairman and Deputy Chairman at home in support of his arguments. Unfortunately the letter was received by them at a time when the friends of Hastings lost control of the Directorate. Therefore, the new Chairman and Deputy Chairman condemned the move of Hastings in severe terms. In reality Macartney was not at fault. Hastings accused Macartney of having betrayed him to his enemies. When Macartney explained his true position,<sup>6</sup> Hastings was not convinced; this widened the gulf between the two.

Again, in order to secure the necessary finance for the conduct of the Mysore war, Warren Hastings advised the cession of the Circars to the Nizam on condition of financial assistance from him. But without orders from the Home authorities Macartney refused to act. Moreover, Macartney rightly felt that the income from the Circars would be more substantial than the help which could be expected from the Nizam.<sup>7</sup>

Yet another cause of ill-feeling between Hastings and Macartney was Macartney's unfortunate letter written to the Marathas.<sup>8</sup> He was anxious for peace with the Marathas

so as to concentrate on Tipu. In September 1781 Macartney, in consultation with Coote, Hughes and Macpherson, sent a letter to the Maratha Government at Poona, assuring them of the eagerness on the part of the English for accommodation. Hastings had not been consulted on the matter, and naturally he resented this action of Macartney.

Finally, the relations with Walajah, the Nawab of the Carnatic, provided another source of friction between the Governor-General and the Governor of Madras. Soon after Macartney assumed office as Governor, Walajah offered him a sum of £30,000 as a present. Macartney refused to accept it, though the Nawab said that it was a customary practice.<sup>9</sup> Macartney informed the Directors about it.

The Madras Government was in acute financial stress on account of the Mysore war, and Macartney persuaded the Nawab to assign his revenues of the Carnatic to the Madras Government for a period of five years, keeping for himself one-sixth for the Nawab's personal expenses.<sup>10</sup> This agreement was made in December 1781 and was in modification of the previous treaty of the Madras Government, concluded with the approval of the Calcutta Government. Now Macartney did not procure the sanction of the Governor-General, and Hastings was not happy about the new move, though he must have felt that it was justified by the financial needs of the Madras Government.

The Nawab himself was smarting under the new agreement. He began to try his best for procuring the cancellation of the assignment. While on the one side he made the collection of the revenue difficult,<sup>11</sup> he wrote to Hastings that the Governor was unnecessarily cruel and oppressive in the exaction. On the basis of the Nawab's complaint, the

Governor-General in council resolved to surrender the assignment. Stating that the 'condition of the Nawab of the Carnatic was destitute and depressed', Hastings ordered the restoration of his revenues to the Nawab.

The financial position of the Madras Government was desperate and Macartney stated that the adoption of the Supreme Government's instruction would prove disastrous and consequently he refused to execute the order without the final approval of the Home authorities.<sup>13</sup>

Eventually, however, in 1785, the Court of Directors agreed to give up the assignment from motives of moderation and attachment to the Nawab.<sup>13</sup> On receipt of this communication Macartney resigned his post and went home to argue his case.

A basic cause for the ill-feeling of Hastings towards Macartney was that Hastings had thought that Macartney was aiming at the Governor-Generalship. Though Macartney had asserted several times in his letters<sup>14</sup> that he had no such intention, Hastings did not believe it. In reality, too, Macartney desired to succeed Hastings and strove secretly to achieve his aim.

Macartney had doubtless certain shortcomings. Though incorruptible and earnest in the discharge of his duties he was given to self-adulation. He had too lofty a view about himself. It is true that the vagueness of the Regulating Act and the over-all control which the Home authorities exercised from a distance were in a large measure responsible for the disputes between Macartney and Hastings; but the friction was not a little due to the unbending and unaccommodative attitude of Macartney. More a theoretician than a practical administrator, often, he failed to see things in their proper perspective and lacked adaptability to the men and conditions of the day.

## **NOTES**

1. But the Regulating Act failed to specify clearly the nature of the control that the "Supreme Government" of Bengal was to exercise over the Presidencies. No wonder, conflicts were bound to arise and the system proved unworkable. In fact the term "Supreme Government" was a misnomer before Pitt's India Act of 1784.
2. Letter No. 136 from Macartney dated 28th January 1782: 'Our Military expenses are enormous .... I do all in my power to reduce them, but whilst Sir Eyre Coote is at the head of our army, the Presidency cannot have that Authority over the Army, which it ought to have, without totally breaking with him'. The letters referred to here are from 'The Private Correspondence of Lord Macartney', edited by C. C. Davies (1950).
3. Letter No. 3 from Macartney dated 3rd November, 1781. See also letter No. 4 dated 24th November, 1781. Sir John Macpherson, too, knew full well the weaknesses of Coote. See letter from Macpherson, No. 56, dated 31st December 1781. "I well know what difficulties you have to manage the old Warrior."
4. Letter No. 150 from Macartney, dated 29th August 1782. It must however, be admitted that Macartney had a profound contempt for soldiers and for what he described their 'silly trade'.
5. Letter No. 84 from Macartney to Hastings, dated 10th May, 1783.
6. Cambridge History of India, Vol. V, p. 5.
7. Letter No. 12 from Macartney to Macpherson, dated 11th January, 1782.
8. Sir Charles Lawson: 'Memoirs of Madras', p. 69.
9. Aitchison: A collection of treaties, engagements and sanads relating to India and neighbouring countries (1909), V, 10.

10. Sir John Barrow in his "Some account of the public life of the Earl of Macartney" (1807) shows how secret orders had been sent to the districts to adopt all means of delay and evasion.
  11. Military Despatches to England, V, p. 19.
  12. It is not improbable that this move of the Home government was brought about by the activities of Paul Benfield who was a notorious intriguer and had been associated with the Nawab for sometime. See Letter No. 145 from Macartney to Staunton, dated 20th March 1782.
  13. See, for example, Letter No. 150 from Macartney to Lawrence Sullivan, dated 29th August 1782. "I question much whether it would be for my advantage". But he adds in the same letter: "The chief temptation to go to Bengal would be to serve a friend or two who are also yours". See also Letter No. 161 from Macartney to the Earl of Ossory, dated 31st January, 1783.
  14. See, for example, Letters from Macartney, No. 4 dated 24th November 1781, No. 153, dated 30th August, 1782, No. 154, dated 3rd September 1782, and No. 157 dated 18th October 1782.
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## **XXVI Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswami**

For a long time Western Art critics had a supreme contempt for Indian art. They looked down upon the non-human or suprahuman element depicted in the images of Gods and Goddesses. Impersonal phenomena also were shown in a grotesquely distorted way. It was obviously on account of their inability or reluctance to understand the religious significance of these representations of art that the contemptuous observations were made by them. Perhaps the scurrilous attack on Hindu art began with the art critic Ruskin who, great as he was, failed to understand the spirit of Hindu art. Indeed he may be considered as the father of the school of misunderstanding of Indian Art in the West.

Ruskin said : " Indian art never presents a natural fact. It either forms its compositions out of meaningless fragments of colour and flowings of line; or it represents that creature under some distorted and monstrous form. To all the facts and forms of Nature, it wilfully and resolutely opposes itself; it will not draw a man, but an eight-armed monster; it will not draw a flower, but only a spiral or zigzag."

It is likely that the views of writers like Maskell, Birdwood, Archer and Vincent Smith have had their roots in Ruskin's criticism. Most of these writers, speaking of the many-armed images of Indian art have treated this peculiarity as an unpardonable defect. V. A. Smith, a discerning critic in respect of several works of Indian art, however, says: After A.D. 300, Indian sculpture, properly so-called, hardly deserves to be reckoned as art. The figures both of men and animals

become stiff and formal, and the idea of power is clumsily expressed by the multiplication of members. The many-headed many-armed Gods and Goddesses whose images crowd the walls and roofs of medieval temples have no pretensions to beauty and are frequently hideous and grotesque.”<sup>1</sup>

Numerous writers have spoken of these ‘hideous deities with animals’ heads and innumerable arms.’ Sir George Birdwood considers that “the monstrous shapes of the Purānic deities are unstable for the higher forms of artistic representation; and this is possibly why sculpture and painting are unknown as fine arts in India.”<sup>2</sup> The real answer to this and several other similar accusations is that they betray a lack of understanding the religious and legendary background of these works of art.

Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswami is one of the earliest exponents of Indian art who exposed the unsoundness of the accusations of the early European writers. It is really marvellous how Dr. Coomaraswami blossomed into an exponent of art. Born on August 22, 1877, of Sri Muthu Coomaraswami, a noted lawyer of Colombo and Lady Elizabeth Clay Beeby, an English lady of Kent, young Coomaraswami was on his father’s death taken by his mother to England when he was barely a babe one year old. After a successful course in Wycliffe College, he joined the University of London and obtained the B A. Degree in Geology and Botany. In his 26th year of age he was appointed as Director of the Mineralogical Survey of Sri Lanka. While he served Sri Lanka in this capacity he published two volumes on the ‘Mineralogical Survey of Ceylon.’ Returning to London, he qualified himself as a D.Sc. in the University of London.

Then he availed himself of opportunities as often as he could in travelling all over India, and fascinated by certain

works of art he collected a large number of Indian drawings, paintings and bronzes.

A true scholar dedicated to studies, he was always, engrossed in reading, thinking and writing. A prolific writer, he has to his credit more than 120 books and monographs 300 scholarly articles and well over 50 learned book reviews.

Prof. Ettinghausen, an American art critic, wrote: "There are few scholars anywhere in the world whose publications cover a wider range than those of Dr. Ananda Kentish Coomaraswami. His researches embrace philosophy, metaphysics, religion, iconography, Indian literature and arts, Islamic art, medieval art, music, geology and especially the place of art in society. More astounding than the sheer quantity of his publications are their extraordinary profundity and originality".

A versatile savant, he had an abiding interest in several fields of study. But though a geologist, botanist, petrologist, and mineralogist, his basic interest lay in art and the allied studies. Even early in his career he had made a beginning in this direction by his contributions on Kandy architecture, Sinhalese earthenware, Sinhalese painting and Medieval Sinhalese art. In due course he focussed his attention on the art treasures of South East Asia. His work on History of Indian and Indonesian art is a classic.

After visiting several Hindu and Buddhist sites in Sri Lanka and India, he turned his attention to the art treasures of India. He acquired a deep knowledge of several languages, particularly Sanskrit, Pāli and Tamil. It is surprising to learn that he was also at home in Greek, Latin, English, French, German, Spanish, Persian, Hindi and Sinhalese. But it is difficult to assess the depth of his knowledge in each of these.

The intimate connection between art, language, religion and philosophy was appreciated by him and this wide perspective enabled him to bring to bear a true understanding of and a critical outlook on these various branches of learning. No wonder, he became an interpreter of the Indian culture to the outside world. Sir William Rothenstein, the discerning critic, did not make an over-statement when he wrote: "To-day, if India takes her due rank as a first-class artistic power, it is in a large measure owing to Coomaraswami." He was a master of not only sculpture, painting and iconography but he contributed to a true understanding of India and her culture by America and West in general. Like Romain Rolland he was bent on creating a true understanding of the Universe in the field of art. This profound scholar was by no means a fanatical bigot or chauvinist. He realised the interplay of Āryan and Dravidian thought in the evolution of the Indian art and culture. He declared with sincere conviction that: "in a very real sense it was a marriage of North and South."

Among the Indians themselves, the petty divisions and partialities of religion and caste were beyond his wide outlook. It is worth while noting that in the midst of his concentration on the great contributions of the higher classes to Indian religion, philosophy and art he did not neglect the intensive study of the Yakshās and Gaṇās.

Nevertheless, he realised the great role played by the Brahmins. Like Romain Rolland he applauded the Indian Brāhmin as the basic creator of Indian culture. "Indian civilisation is Brāhmin civilisation," said Coomaraswami. He went a step further. He held that Indian philosophy is essentially the creation of the two upper classes of society, the Brāhmins and the Kṣhatriyās. Clarifying the idea further he added: "To Kṣhatriyās are due most of its forward

movements; to the former its elaboration, systematisation, mythical representation and application. The secret of Brāhmaṇ power is above all in the nature of their appointed *dharma*, of study, teaching and renunciation". No doubt, these are ideals and they were strictly followed in early times.

The Kṣatriya-Brāhmaṇ solution of the ultimate problems of life is given in the early Upaniṣads. It is a form of Absolute according to Śaṅkarāchārya, or modified (according to Rāmānuja) Monism.

This assignment of a lofty place to the higher castes would not have been liked by the people of the non-brāhmaṇ castes in India. But he is one of those who wrote without fear or favour. He is intolerant of cant and history written to please the gallery. At the same time he was not opposed to caste. He said: 'A man can be a Brāhmaṇ only if he has proved himself to be one. I would like to see, not the abolition of caste, but the intensification of caste in this direction. In this sense, only the discoverer to truth, the creative artist and the teacher can be Brāhmaṇs, and not the Brāhmaṇ cooks, the Brāhmaṇ clerks, and all the other so-called born Brāhmaṇs'. This is a clear instance of his plain speaking.

Nor was he an opponent of Buddhism. Indeed he had a profound admiration for the Buddha's teachings and his appreciation of Buddhist ascetics is also conspicuous. His idea was that the Buddha was typically Indian. It is difficult to separate what is Buddhist from what is generally Hindu. And he draws pointed attention to one of those celebrated edicts of Aśoka which proclaimed that 'All men are my children.'

A distinctive feature of Coomaraswami as an art critic is that he saw and appreciated art through the religious back-

ground. He once said "No day passes in which I do not read the scriptures and the works of the great philosophers of all ages so far as they are accessible to me in modern Indian languages and in Latin, Greek and Sanskrit. I am wholly convinced that there is one truth that shines through them all in many shapes, a truth greater in glory by far than can be circumscribed by any creed or confined by the walls of any church or temple". This is truly religion of the highest order. He adds with feeling : "Let us tell the painful truth that most of these works (of art) are about God, whom nowadays we never mention in polite society."<sup>4</sup> That the religious scholasticism was the basis of Indian art was brought to the fore by Coomaraswami. On the other hand, E. B. Havell was the first Western art critic who realised the spiritual background of Indian art.

How religion and art are seen with equally open eyes can be found from Coomaraswami's warm appreciation of the sitting Buddha as the Dancing Siva. The facial expressions of these masterpieces of art he admires. A like impersonality appears in the facial expression of all the finest Indian sculptures. Says he : "If the dancing figure stands for evolution the everlasting becoming the *Yogi* type of the seated Buddha is an equally dramatic image of withdrawal, of complete independence, of involution." He appreciated Christian art also. This is seen from his book "Christian and Indian philosophy."

He goes on to add that these creations of art are not the freaks of individual artisans but that they are products of a long tradition. Says he : "Images such as the dancing Siva or the seated Buddha are the work of a school, not of any artist." All the essentials are passed on from father to son. The great craftsmen who made the world-famous bronze images of Siva have not unfortunately left behind a tradition. Practically after the days of the Imperial Chōlas and more

particularly after the age of the Nayaks there was a decline and their arts deteriorated and became stilted and artificial.

*Dance of Śiva*: It is common knowledge that he showed how the artistic workmanship of dancing Śiva has become the pride of India and the wonder of the world. He has expounded clearly that the entire piece is based on a profound study of Tiruvāchagam, Tirumantiram and Sanskrit works like ‘Śiva Pradōsha stōtra’ and ‘Kathā Sarit Sāgara’. He admires how the pose, the limbs and ornamentations speak vividly the underlying thought of the great dance of Śiva, Naṭarāja, the prince of dancers. Coomaraswami explains how the Dance of Śiva represents the five activities of the supreme creation, preservation, destruction, veiling of embodiment and ultimately salvation. These are considered respectively as depicting the activities of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra, Mahēśvara and Sadāśiva.

Even the worst scoffer at religion cannot ignore the inner meaning and the subtle co-ordination of art with religion. Coomaraswami himself admired the grandeur of this conception as a synthesis of science, religion and art.

“Śiva is said to dance in the evening in the presence of the Goddess Pārvati in order to relieve the suffering of the dēvās. The dance of Naṭarāja is believed to symbolize the action of cosmic energy in creating, preserving and destroying the visible Universe. The Purāṇas say that during those dances the whole congregations of Gods, demi-gods and saints present themselves to render their obeisance to Śiva. Hence the name Sabhāpati means “the Lord of the Assembly of Gods.”

Though religion provides a background for the understanding of art, it does not mean that outside the context of the religious basis one cannot appreciate art. How many Hindus have admired excellent pieces of Christian art or

Islamic art? Even so the "Dance of Śiva" has been appreciated later by non-Hindus also after Dr. Coomaraswami enlightened the world on the glory of this masterpiece of art. Several European art critics have admired the language of gesture in Indian art.

Take for instance what Grousset says: "The King of the Dance wears a broad smile. He smiles at death and at life, at pain and at joy alike, or rather, if we may be allowed so to express it, his smile is both death and life, both joy and pain. The plastic beauty of rhythm is no more than the expression of an ideal rhythm. The very multiplicity of arms puzzling as it may seem at first sight, is subject in turn to an inward law, each pair remaining a model of elegance in itself, as that the whole being of the Naṭarāja thrills with a magnificent harmony in his terrible joy."<sup>6</sup> Coomaraswami showed that behind the dance there is the manifestation of primal rhythmic energy.

If he appreciated Dance, he did not ignore the sister art of Music. In fact his view was that music was of Vēdic origin and that it developed to a great height during the golden age of the Gupiās. But it is remarkable that he has not said anything about the contribution of the South to the music of India. He has failed to realise that there was a co-ordination of the patterns of music of both North India and South India. It is inexplicable how he has not taken note of the celebrated Kulumiyūlai and Tirumayam inscriptions of music. But he has made a systematic attempt to compare the musical systems of West with those of India. He has comprehended Indian music of old in its true religious setting and he contended that music was not merely an art but life itself. The emotional appeal of music to the inner soul and to the religious fervour of the people was effectively expounded by him.

Taking every aspect of art and spirituality into consideration he held that India, dominated by the West, had a great lesson to teach the world. In his scintillating essay ‘What has India contributed to Human Welfare’ he observes that the essential contribution of India is simply her “*Indianness*”, her distinctive individuality, inherited from times of old. He wrote: “All that India can offer to the world proceeds from her philosophy. Philosophy is the key to the map of life.” He pleaded fervently that this *Indianness* must be preserved and developed but he forgot what Alberuni stressed decades ago that India had developed a self-complacence and intellectual arrogance. Coomaraswami was, however, against the Westernisation of the educational system of India. His contention was that the Western system of education was not suited to India and her genius. It will ultimately have a deadening influence on the individuality of Indian culture. In his own words he warned Indians of the ‘Proselytizing fury’ of Occidental civilisation. He added: Life is larger than bath tubs, radios and refrigerators. I am afraid the higher the standard of living, the lower the culture.” Naturally he appealed to the Indians that we must cherish our *Indianness*. This is a piece of over-statement and has to be taken with a reserve. Even when India achieved her independence his cry was “Be yourself” and he added that “nations are created by artists and poets, not by merchants and politicians. In art lie the deepest life principles.” Everyone may not agree with the implication that the West has to teach India nothing. Nor is he right in underrating the value of Western education and even literacy.

But he did not preach intellectual exclusiveness or isolation on the part of India. He admired the Rabindranath Tagore’s philosophy of “*Vishwa Bharati*” and appreciated the ideal of founding a school of Oriental learning which would attract

scholars from all parts of the world. He was by no means an isolationist or cultural chauvinist. His desire was to bring about an intimate cultural understanding between the East and West. In fact "his idealistic approach to nationalism combined the nationalistic spirit of Mazzini, the intellectual freedom of Emerson and the aesthetic insight of Ananda Vardhana."

His noblest ideal was cultural internationalism. Though he extolled the East against the West, his mature writings show that he appreciated all that was best in other cultures and traditions. Indeed, Dr. Aldous Huxley has recorded that "he was able to profit by the extraordinary combination of vast learning and penetrating insight which gave to Dr. Coomaraswami his unique importance as a mediation between the East and West." This so-called mediation between East and West is an instance of over-statement. Dr. Coomaraswami's Universalism combined harmoniously with admiration of Indian art is his distinguishing contribution to the world thought. If Dr. Coomaraswami opened the eyes of the world to the treasures of Indian art it is the Boston Museum which provided the wonderful opportunity for this noble work. Suppose he had accepted an appointment in the Benares University or even in a South Indian University or Sri Lanka University he might have wasted his life. In all probability he would have lost himself in intrigue and self adulation. Therefore, his inborn love of art, his assiduous study as well as the excellent opportunity offered by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts where he worked for about thirty years have contributed to the true appreciation of Indian Art. Let us pay our homage to Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswami and also our sincere gratitude to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

## N O T E S

1. Imperial Gazetteer of India, 1910, Vol. II.
  2. Industrial Arts of India, 1880, p. 125.
  3. Dr. S. Chandrasekhar in his article "The Ananda Coomaraswamy I Knew" in the "Hindu" of August 28, 1977.
  4. *Ibid.*
  5. H. Krishna Sastri: *South Indian Images of Gods and Goddesses*, p. 79.
  6. Grousset, *India* (English translation), p. 252 and see Havell: *Ideals of Indian Art.* p. 79.
  7. Dr. Ananda Coomaraswami asserted that the educational pattern should not produce "a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, opinions, in morals in intellect" as Macaulay wished. See Airavathan Ranganathan in "the Silver Jubilee" Volume of the Archaeological Society of South India, 1962. But this is undoubtedly a prejudiced and one-sided view.
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## XXVII. Gandhiji and Social Reconstruction

One aspect of the greatness of Gandhiji is seen in his championship of apparently conflicting aims of social reconstruction. On the one hand, he held fast to the Hindu traditional system of *varṇāśrama dharma*, while on the other, he protested vehemently against the age-long custom of untouchability. He thought, unlike several others, that these two objectives were not contradictory to each other.

### *Varnāśrama Dharma*

Mahatma Gandhi imported a new meaning and significance to the *varṇāśrama* system and held that the four-fold classification based on hereditary occupation was at once a true socialism and a law of spiritual economics. For those who thought that this is undemocratic and that career would not be always open to talents, his reply was that there was scope for individuals of ability to rise in eminence in their allotted sphere of duties. His contention was that *varṇāśrama dharma*, based upon a hereditary division of labour was a universal law governing the human family. He thought that *varṇāśrama dharma* is a lesson and an ideal for the rest of the world. According to him "*varṇa* is the Law of Man's Being, and therefore, is as necessary for Christianity and Islam as it has been necessary for Hinduism and has been its savings." He added: "I have not hesitated to consider *Varnāśrama Dharma* as a gift of Hinduism to mankind. Acceptance of that *dharma* is, so far as I have been able to see it, a condition of spiritual growth." His focus of attention was on the advancement and cultural progress of the social unity as a whole. The

individual's interests are to be subordinated to social development. This is what he meant when he wrote: " *Varnāśrama* satisfies the religious needs, because a whole community accepting the law is free to devote ample time to spiritual perfection. Observance of the law obviates social evil and entirely prevents the killing economic competition."

It is important to remember that he made a distinction between *varṇa* and caste. He held that "*varṇa* has nothing to do with caste. Caste is an excrescence upon Hinduism." The division into innumerable castes is, according to him, an unwarranted liberty taken with the doctrine of *varṇāśrama dharma*.

Is there any scope for interchangeability of occupations? His answer is in the negative. However, an individual is not to be prevented from resorting to another pursuit for a time influenced by personal liking, but not as a profession and as a means of earning his livelihood. According to Gandhiji "to say that a brāhmaṇ should not touch the plough is a parody of *varṇāśrama dharma* and a prostitution of the meaning of the *Bhagavad Gītā*. Surely, the qualities predominantly ascribed to the different divisions are not denied to the others." This may seem to be paradoxical. But he made his position clear by stating that as a rule the transgression of occupational division is not desirable. "The only profession after his heart should be profession of his father," but adds that "it would be right for any brainy carpenter to become a lawyer for service, not for money." Gandhiji knew full well that the trends of the time were against his prescription. He himself admitted that "in an age where competition is held to be the Law of Life, and possession in the largest measure of the world's goods the *summum bonum*, and when everyone

counts oneself free to follow any calling one likes, this attempt to hold *varna* as the Law of Life may well be regarded as an idle dream, and an attempt to revise it as a childish folly. Be that as it may, it is my firm conviction that it is true socialism." He adumbrated his ideal, while fully aware of its impracticality at present.

But his championship of the *varṇāśrama dharma* afforded no scope for the assumption of superiority of one *varṇa* over another. He wrote: "All *varṇas* are equal, for the community depends no less on one than on another. Today *varṇa* means gradations of high and low. It is hideous travesty of the original." Gandhiji roundly condemned the modern caste with its arrogant exclusiveness. Service of all to the society is the ideal he prescribed. "A brāhmaṇ is he who is the servant of all, even of the Śūdras and the untouchables. He alone is a *kṣatriya* who uses the whole of himself for the defence and honour of society." Thus, service, no less than character, entitles persons to occupy their position in the respective *varṇāś*.

He stated that brahmins as a class have suffered degradation and added that, if they had not, and if they had lived up to their profession, Hinduism would not be in the degraded state in which it is at present. He draws pointed attention to the words of Yudhishṭira in the *Mahābhārata*: "Truth, charity, forgiveness, good conduct, gentleness, austerity and mercy, where these are seen, O! King of Serpents! there is Brāhmaṇ. If these marks exist in a Śūdra and are not in a *Dvija*, the Śūdra is not a Śūdra, nor the Brāhmaṇ Brāhmaṇ."

#### *The removal of untouchability :*

Little wonder that the abominable custom of untouchability provoked his vehement opposition. The annihilation of untouchability and unapproachability constituted an

important element of his missionary work. A more effective pronouncement on this question could have been made than when he said: "I feel more than ever, that if untouchability lives, Hinduism dies." He spoke with the zeal of a prophet. He was up against age-old but irrational tradition, vested interest, religious fanaticism, hide-bound conservatism, ignorance and superstition. It is amazing that in spite of it all, his efforts were not crowned with a remarkable success.

There appeared a controversy among leaders as to whether untouchability was sanctioned by the *sāstras*. Gandhiji felt that "there is no such thing as untouchability by birth in the *Sāstras*." But, some, as for instance, Śrī R. Krishnaswami Aiyar of Tirunelveli justified untouchability in support of which he quoted *Manu Dharmasāstra*, *Gautama Dharmasāstra*, *Vyāghrapāda* and *Bṛhaspati*. Though Gandhiji did not claim mastery of the *Sāstras*, he professed to understand the secret of Hinduism and he did not hesitate to describe "untouchability as practised today a Satanic activity." He added that the *Gītā* teaches us that members of all the four castes should be treated on an equal basis. He said: "I believe in the doctrine of equality as taught by Lord Krishna in the *Gītā*. The *Gītā* teaches us that members of all the four castes should be treated on an equal basis. It does not prescribe the same *dharma* for the brāhmaṇa as for the bhangi. But it insists that the latter should be entitled to the same measure of consideration and esteem as the former with all his superior learning. It is, therefore, our duty to see that untouchables do not feel they are despised and looked down upon."

Apparently conflicting as *varnāśrama dharma* and the removal of untouchability may seem, he saw no irreconcilability between the two, in spite of several critics pressing on him the contrary view. In fact, the courage of his conviction is nowhere seen so strikingly as on this question.

His supreme contempt for cheap popularity in disregard of sincere convictions is nowhere reflected better than in this.

But he was not a visionary. If there were to be a conflict between *varnāśrama dharma* and untouchability, as was indicated to him by several critics, he was perfectly clear in his preference. Said he: 'If *varnāśrama* goes to the dogs in the removal of untouchability, I shall not shed a tear.'

Nor was his attitude towards the removal of untouchability negative in character. It was followed by the agitation for Temple entry and the opening of public wells, educational institutions etc, for all irrespective of caste or colour. This scheme of Harijan up-lift was calculated to elevate the position of the Harijans in all sphere of social activity. Vigorous writing appeared continuously in '*Young India*', championing the cause of Temple entry and Harijan uplift. The principal theatre of the struggle was Travancore, in places like Quilon and Vaikom. Kerala was for ages the stronghold of untouchability and unapproachability of the most abominable type, Gandhiji was intent on securing a real conversion of heart on the part of the caste Hindus. Simultaneously he induced the Government of the State to legalise Temple entry. At first he was opposed to the idea of employing *Satyāgraha* for securing Temple entry, for his conviction was that those who resort to *Satyāgraha* must be actuated by perfect sincerity and nobility of purpose. But eventually he was obliged to employ it because, as he said, "*Satyāgraha* is the most powerful process of conversion. It is an appeal to the heart." Finally the struggle resulted in the Temple Entry Proclamation of Travancore in 1966. Doubtless, this was a great victory for the cause and a landmark in the history of Hinduism; but it formed only the beginning of the struggle in the rest of India. This was but a milestone in the uplift of the Harijans.

Gandhiji was strongly against the perpetuation of separate schools and separate institutions for the exclusive benefit of the Harijans, even as he was against separate electorates, for the simple reason that these well-intentioned projects would tend to perpetuate separatism and a permanent status of inferiority for the Harijans. "Do not segregate Harijans to Cheris. Allow them to appear in all places," was his clarion call for the eradication of isolationism and a sense of inferiority.

The noble work begun by Mahatma Gandhi, and carried on by many followers and supported by Governments in Independent India, has led to substantial results. But much more remains to be achieved in the direction of removing untouchability. It is significant that as recently as August 31, 1968 Shri Jagajivan Ram, the Hon'ble Minister for Food and Agriculture in the Union Government at the time, was obliged to call upon the Scheduled castes and tribes to carry on their struggle for securing an honourable place in society. He stated : "It is not true that untouchability is practised in villages only. It is practised in Delhi itself. Right in the Secretariat, they keep *Surahis* (earthenware containers) exclusively for the Harijans." This reveals how Gandhiji has only laid the foundations for the eradication of an evil which has persisted for ages. But personal or political grievances should not be employed to condemn a society in round terms. On May 21, 1979 Jagajivan Ram said in a bad temper that 'he was not acceptable to the Hindu society and that he had only foisted himself on it.' These are strong words and not justified by the attempts, however small, made to improve the position of the 'deprived classes'.

#### *Interdining and Intermarriage :*

Naturally Gandhiji with his ambition of abolishing untouchability would have been expected to encourage interdining and intermarriage. But it is curious to observe that he was not enthusiastic about popularising these pieces of social

reform. His contention was that they do not solve the problem so long as faulty notions of superiority and inferiority among castes persist. His idea was that the real cure for the malady lies in a sincere change of heart among the people. A real and not a formal spirit of equality should be the aim. He said "I would neither object to nor advocate participation in international or cosmopolitan dinner, for the simple reason that such functions do not necessarily promote friendship or goodwill."

Occasionally we find Gandhiji making palpably contradictory statements on this question. Once, asked whether interdining and intermarriages are necessary for the removal of untouchability, he replied, "No and Yes" No, because they are matters of individual concern, Yes, because if a person refused to take food touched by another person on the ground of untouchability or inferiority, he is observing untouchability." In fact, there was a certain measure of flexibility in his views on interdining and intermarriage. He himself states: "At one time I did say that interdining was not an essential part of the campaign for the removal of untouchability. Personally I was for it. Today I encourage it. In fact, today I even go further." Regarding intermarriage, at one time, he said that it is desirable that Caste Hindu girls should select Harijan husbands. But, as stated earlier, his views on these questions did not get petrified into immutable prescriptions. His confession of inconsistency in respect of certain views like his confession of his so-called 'Himalayan blunders' is characteristic of his utter frankness. He wrote thus with perfect candour: "When anybody finds any inconsistency between any two writings of mine, if he has still faith in my sanity, he would do well to choose the latter of the two on the same subject." Apparently he must have felt, though he has not stated it anywhere, that consistency for its own sake, is the hobgoblin of little minds.

*Women's place in society :*

His views regarding the position of woman are typically Gandhian. On the one hand he protested against the view attributed to many that "for woman there can be no freedom." On the other hand, he was against women competing with men in all walks of life. His conviction was that the 'home' is her proper sphere, which she has to ennoble by devoted attention to her legitimate duties. The Indian ideal of womanhood can be cherished and the healthy development of Indian culture was promoted only by this division of labour. While, therefore, he held that the woman's rights should not be invaded and that she is the queen, not the slave, of the household over which she presided, 'Gandhiji wanted women to eschew competition with men in the field of public employment. On this matter opinions may differ, and the modern tendency among educated women is against his prescription. But quite a large number of women in India still follow the traditional ideal which Gandhiji advocated.

It is no surprise that the unfortunate degradation of some women resorting to immoral ways of earning a living was stoutly opposed by him. He was against the dedication of girls to prostitution which became common among the Dévadāsis associated with the temple from medieval times.

*Vegetarianism, Prohibition etc.:*

Both by precept and by example Mahatma Gandhi was a champion of vegetarianism. In his writing he emphasised the supreme merit of vegetarianism from the stand-point of physical and mental wellbeing and advocated it with his characteristic fervour. More important was his crusade in the cause of Prohibition. He wrote and spoke vehemently against the demon of drink. The importance of prohibition in his scheme of social reconstruction cannot be overrated.

Prohibition is now enforced by law in several States in India, and although there are limitations to the efficacy of legislation on a social evil which had prevailed over ages, much good has resulted from it. Despite temptations on the part of several legislators to give up prohibition in order to improve the finances of governments, it seems that on the whole prohibition has come to stay. Doubtless Gandhiji's emphasis on prohibition is one of his lasting contributions to the social regeneration of India. The evils of the drink habit can hardly be exaggerated, and the physical, mental and moral tone of the people are bound to be improved through a sustained policy of prohibition, supported by the sincere co-operation of the people.

#### *Swadeshism, Spiritualism etc. :*

Gandhiji's passion was to inculcate wholesome habits among the people. Personal cleanliness was greatly valued and stressed by him, simplicity of personal dress became a creed with him, advocated no less on hygienic than on economic grounds. The poverty of our country, and in particular, the inability of India to produce the entire cloth required by the Indians prompted him to restrict himself to the use of loin cloth and to advocate *Khadi* for all people. Whether the economic basis of *khaddhar* is sound or not, Gandhiji's championship of *khaddhar* was closely connected with his desire to inculcate the love of *swadeshi* or indigenous commodities among the people of India. The agitation for the boycott of British goods was as much political as social in its motivation. Gandhiji's passion for the indigenous things stemmed from his love of the traditional culture of the country. He denounced the irrational and ridiculous imitation of Westernism by Indians in respect of clothing and the daily habits of life. What a marvellous change this attitude has brought in the outlook of the educated Indian, in particular in the matter of sartorial patterns, is worthy of note.

Mahatma Gandhi's contempt for Westernism was coupled with his antipathy towards materialism. He declared unequivocally thus: "I am not enamoured of the materialism of the West. It almost seems as though God in His Wisdom had prevented India from progressing along those lines so that it might fulfil its special mission of resisting the onrush of materialism." At the heart of hearts he was yearning for the India of old, with its traditional simplicity, dominated by spiritualism. How far these ideals would be feasible in the present age of machinery is a matter of serious doubt. But this pet aspiration of his has commendable elements in it and has influenced the life and thought of numerous people.

#### *Hindu Muslim Unity :*

Though an ardent Hindu and a devoted *sanātanist*, Gandhiji was an Indian first and an Indian last. His spiritualism was not inconsistent with his advocacy of secularism in politics. His vision of India was based on Hindu-Muslim unity and on perfect concord of all the communities in the country. In respect of social reconstruction in India, the promotion of Hindu-Muslim understanding and co-operation was a vital factor. He could never countenance the idea of a partition of India; unfortunately his failure to avert it was a sore thing which afflicted him in the last stage of his life. In fact, from the early days of his political activity he attached supreme importance to the maintenance of Hindu-Muslim unity. He considered it as one of the three pillars of *swaraj*; the other two were the propagation of *khadi* and the removal of untouchability.

Gandhiji has had admirers and critics both in India and out-side. None denies that some of his ideas regarding social reconstruction have been severely opposed. But when the sum total of his impact is considered, it is the barest truth to say that he is unrivalled in his influence on modern India, in the social, no less than in the political sphere.

## **XXVIII. Population Trends in Modern India**

In recent socio-economic history, no question has received such a great attention in India, as the problem of over population. Unemployment, the low standard of life and the miserable position of the villages are others, but they are all intimately connected with overpopulation. When a given population shows signs of increasing in such a measure as to indicate a growing diminution of income per head, we speak of a tendency leading to overpopulation.

Though Malthus, the English economist is the earliest of the modern writers to lay stress on the so-called 'population explosion' in the economically backward countries, several others have also emphasized it. Recent analysis has, however, shown that the theory of Malthus on population is defective in certain particulars. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that it still contains a fundamental element of truth. Basically Malthus was right in his estimate of the power of human increase and in holding that except under the most unusually favourable circumstances, means of subsistence will not keep pace with the growth of population if human fecundity is realized to the optimum extent.

Long before Malthus, surveys of population, however perfunctory, had been undertaken. We learn about a Census in ancient Rome in the reign of Servius Tullius, in the 6th century B. C. Later we hear of a more systematic Census in the time of Julius Ceasar in the 1st century B. C.

Several other countries had attempted to prepare their Censuses. The Arab world, however, has paid scant attention to it. Even in recent times when the Census was taken in

some countries the results were kept confidential. For instance, no Census was taken in Lebanon since it gained independence in 1943. The reason was the acute rivalry between Christians and Muslims, and therefore the facts connected with the population formed sensitive political issues. No Census on a nation-wide scale has been undertaken since 1960. In Saudi Arabia a Census was undertaken only last year. But the results have not been released. Oil politics is the principal factor. The authorities do not want to disclose to the world that the country is underpopulated. In Ethiopia again the Government is against Census. The Arab world on the whole, has intrinsically a suspicion about head counts and other census information such as the number of wives. A Western demographer declared that "there has never been a reliable census anywhere in the Arab world".

In India we hear of Census as early as the time of Kauṭilya. His *Arthaśāstra* speaks of two important officials: the *Samaharta* and *Sannidhata*. *Samaharta* was comparable to the Collector-General. He supervised the collection of revenue in the whole State. All the *Adhyakshas* (superintendents) whose duties covered the entire range of the civil and economic life of the people, were subordinate to the *Samaharta*. His function included the maintenance of census and survey, recording the enumeration of the people, their houses and cattle as also the measurements of their pastures, gardens, arable lands etc. The main objective was the collection of military data. It seems probable that the practice of taking census though imperfect, was in vogue in all places of India where settled administrations prevailed.

Not only in North and Central India but also in the extreme South, census operations were undertaken. As far as our knowledge goes, under the Imperial Chōlas, one Sēnāpati Kuṭavan Ulagalandān is mentioned in some of the Tañjavūr inscriptions. Apparently the officer received his

surname *Ulagaṇḍān* (one who measured the world) after carrying out the revenue survey which began in A.D. 1001. References to such surveys are found in several subsequent records which show that the preparation of Census, however imperfect, was in vogue.

In the Medieval period also we find certain examples under well-organized administrations as under Akbar. The *Ain-i-Akbari* was an encyclopaedic treasure of statistics regarding the empire. We do not have authentic references to the practice of preparing Census returns in the other parts of India till 1872 under the British. But this Census report of 1872 itself was incomplete. In fact, the Census report of modern times commences only with that of 1881. It was prepared systematically on an actuarial study of the age data and the preparation of a life time with the aid of well-qualified British actuaries. In respect of the subsequent Census operations, this work was undertaken by trained Indian actuaries.

Ever since the Malthusian gloom had infected the British economists, it began to influence their Indian counterparts, too. Therefore, the subjects mainly concentrated in the Census Reports of India were the problems of population and food supply. While the Census Returns of the decades from 1881 to 1921 were describing the statistics and other details concerning the people, the problem of overpopulation began to receive a marked attention from the Census Report of 1921. One of the effects of the new emphasis was that the Indian National Congress appointed a National Planning Committee which had a sub-committee on population. The report was published in 1947. But it did not suggest any bold plans. Further advance in the direction of arresting the growth of population took place only later.

#### *The data provided by the Censuses in Modern India*

The Census returns of modern India are valuable. There has been an unbroken chain of decennial population censuses

from 1872, a record that few countries in the world can claim. The Census of 1872 was incomplete; but the succeeding ones were systematic and full. With the taking of the last Census in 1971 we completed 100 years of Census taking in the country. With every Census the technique adopted has shown improvement. Since the Census of 1971, the Census data pertain to the population as at the sunrise of 1st April of 1971 or the Census year. The enumerations are all done on the basis of a well-laid plan. All possible care is taken in the Census count in order to ensure complete coverage. Nevertheless, accuracy in respect of all details concerning the population of the vast sub-continent cannot be claimed to have been achieved.

Some basic Tables alone are recorded below :-

#### **INDIA'S POPULATION: SOME DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS**

Year	Population (in million)	Sex Ratio (Females per 1000 males)	Percentage of Distribution	
			Rural	Urban
1891	235.9	958	90.5	9.5
1901	238.4	972	89.2	10.8
1911	252.1	964	89.7	10.3
1921	251.3	955	88.8	11.2
1931	279.0	950	88.0	12.0
1941	318.7	945	86.1	13.9
1951	361.1	946	82.7	17.3
1961	439.2	941	82.0	18.0
1971	547.9	930	80.1	19.9

The data provided even in the Census Reports are not quite accurate. In fact, one recent writer stated that "the non-availability of reliable and up-to-date statistics is a basic flaw in the management of our economy."

On account of the great importance paid to the language question the following Table pertaining to 1971 is included.

Language	Population in million	Percentage of the total population
Hindi	162.58	29.67
Bengali	44.79	8.17
Telugu	44.75	8.17
Marathi	42.25	7.71
Tamil	37.69	6.88
Urdu	28.61	5.22
Gujarathi	25.88	4.72
Malayalam	21.94	4.00
Kannada	21.71	3.96
Oriya	19.86	3.62
Punjabi	16.45	3.00
Assamese	8.96	1.64
Kashmiri	2.44	0.45
Sindhi	1.68	0.31
Other languages	69.36	12.48

(i) How glaringly disparate statements are made about this language affair even by responsible men !

#### *Religion :*

Regarding the distribution on the basis of religion according to the 1971 Census, 82.7% of India's population belonged to the Hindu religion and about 11.2% to the Muslim religion. The percentage of the Christians and the Sikhs was 2.6 and 1.9 respectively.

#### *Literacy :*

Literacy in any languages was as low as 6% in 1891 and only 8% in 1931. In 1971 it had increased to 29%. Male literacy was found to be nearly 39% and female

literacy was found to be about 19 %. Rural areas have lower literacy rate than urban areas. The proportion of literates with the population of 5 years and more in age is 33.8 %, it being 43.4% among males and 21.5% among females.

Perhaps an important grouping is on the basis of fertility.

#### *Fertility :*

The fertility of the Indian woman is high and normally between 6 and 7 children are born to a couple who remain married throughout the reproductive period. This average number is, however, reduced from 4 to 5 when some are widowed, divorced or separated.

The pattern of age-specific fertility among females between the ages 15—44 shows that the highest fertility exists among females in the ages between 25 and 29 years. The rate then tends to decline and the decline takes a very sharp turn after the age of 35.

There is some evidence to indicate that fertility of those women who are educated above Matriculation and also of those who marry after the age of 19 is lower than of those who are less educated or marry earlier.

#### *The growth of population :*

According to some rough estimates the population of India about the middle of the 19th century was nearly 100 millions. It had risen by 1941 to 318 millions. It is estimated by certain demographers that in recent years India's population increases every year by at least four millions. Many students of Indian demography have been greatly shocked by the "alarming rate of increase", for India is apparently adding the population of a Spain or a Poland or an England every decade !

The growth of India's population in the last two decades has been amazing. In 1961, it was about 439 millions. It increased to 548 millions in 1971 and is estimated to have reached 604 million in 1975 which represents an increase of 10.4% since 1971. The annual increase was 1.26% in 1941-51, 1.97% in 1951-61 and 2.2% since then. The projected population of India in 1980 is 672 million, in 1990, 819 million and in 2000 A.D., 969 million. This shows that every year India is adding to its number of people no less than 15 million. At this rate, the population of the country might reach nearly 7000 million in 200 years' time. This is staggering!

There are variations in the forecasts. A Planning Commission Committee recently expressed that the Indian population is projected to rise to 697 million by 1983, 761 million by 1988 and 799 million by 1991.

The density per sq. kilometre is a little less than 200 now; it is likely to reach 315 by 2000 A.D. Progress in public health, improved agriculture, assured food supply from outside when necessary, control of droughts, inundations except occasionally as in the current years, and famines and the comparative improvement of economic conditions are responsible for the growth of population. Occasionally some theoreticians raise a doubt whether the increase in population is such an undesirable phenomenon as it has been made out to be. They hold that in the past, periods of rapid economic development have also been periods of increasing population but whether there is any causal relationship between the two or how it works one cannot say with any certainty. In the periods of rapid development and changing techniques it is questionable whether the concept of 'optimum' population can have any precise meaning. But generally speaking, there is no doubt that given a situation in which

shortage of capital equipment rather than of labour is the main limiting factor in development, a rapidly growing population is apt to become more a source of embarrassment than of help to a programme for raising standards of living. In other words, the higher the rate of increase of population, the larger is likely to be the effort needed to raise the *per capita* living standards.

In this connection it has to be noted that in recent times there has been immigration from abroad. Besides immigration from Burma, Pākistān, Bāngla Dēsh and other places, about 64,000 families of Śrī Laṅka repatriates are expected to arrive in India during the Sixth Plan period.

Even earlier, the menace of growing population and its consequences were stressed by Jawaharlal Nehru and others of the Congress soon after India became independent. It was emphasized that the pressure of population in India is already so high that a reduction in the rate of growth must be regarded as a major desideratum. To some extent, improvement in living standards and widespread education, especially among women will themselves tend to lower the rate. But positive measures are also necessary for inculcation of the need and the techniques of Family Planning.<sup>2</sup> The Five Year Plans for effecting essential changes in the economic development were contemplated. But before considering the suggestions made by each Planning Commission in respect of population it is not irrelevant to examine the position in the leading countries which are not overpopulated. There is no doubt that countries like Japan,<sup>3</sup> West Germany and the United Kingdom as well as India are faced by the threat of overpopulation.

In some countries of Europe, America and in Australia the population has either been growing slowly, is stationary

or is declining. France is perhaps the only country which has experienced an actual excess of deaths over births for more than a short period. For instance, the French birth and death rates for 1939 were 14.6 and 15.5 and for 1943 they were 15.9 and 16.4 respectively. France was also known as the classic country of birth control. But since the end of the Second World War the new French Government has pursued a very vigorous pro-natalist population policy and there is already a slight reversal of the downward trend of the French population. Now there is an actual small overall increase of the French population.

On the other hand, there is a tendency for the population to decline. One writer stated: "If the birth rate of the United States should continue to decline as it has during most of the present century by the year 1975, there would be no babies born at all." But it is noteworthy that quite recently the trend has been in the direction of increase in population; the birth rate has mounted up.

Yet population explosion is a myth so far as the U. S. A. is concerned. About 10% of the Americans are over 65 and this proportion would grow if the birth rate decline continues. When the proportion of old people increases, with proportionately fewer taxpayers in the younger age, there is difficulty in financing the social welfare programme needed by the elderly people.

It must be noted that in the U.S.A. a larger female population is remaining single now compared with the position in 1960. And many women marry late. So overpopulation has no real meaning for contemporary America.

Africa, South America, Australia, Central and Northern Asia have largely vacant areas with densities of less than 15 per sq. k. m. They may be said to be underpopulated.

But really when the whole world is taken into consideration, it cannot be said that it is not overcrowded. The only problem arises from the fact that the population is unevenly distributed. South East Asia, Europe and Eastern North America contain 80% of the earth's population living on 13% of the land's surface, with densities ranging from 15 people per sq. k. m.

It must be noted that some of the areas with the highest densities have the highest standards of living. Holland, for example, has a density of 985 people per sq. mile, the highest in the world. This compares with rates such as 710 (Japan), 627 (West Germany), 590 (U.K.), 455 (Italy), 416 (India), 237 (France), 197 (Indonesia), 174 (Greece), 57 (U. S) and 29 (Soviet Union). In respect of some countries the density is not known. One thing to be observed is that generalisations in regard to population and its density have to be made with caution. But in relation to the resources there is no doubt that in recent decades India has become overpopulated. Before considering the measures undertaken to combat this problem, there are a few incidental results which call for notice.

*Pollution control* on account of the growth of population, has become a necessity in several places in India, particularly in Tamil Nādu. Loud speakers add to the gravity of problem. Noise causes permanent damage to the airdrums leading to the loss of hearing. It also results in dizziness, headache, fatigue and inefficiency at work. In our country, legislation to control noise sources is virtually absent. Really, stringent measures have to be taken. Pollution control is a subject that has to be tackled on a war-footing before man becomes a victim of his own making with his living environment getting polluted by various toxic chemicals. India has the largest number of blind children. A cautious approach is needed

for industrialisation of the rural areas from this point of view. An efficient type of dust collector has been invented. It is hoped that India may be able to adopt it.

There is a view that planting of trees on either side of the roads around industrial areas, residential localities, hospitals, etc. will minimise the nuisance created by noise considerably. Mr. Frank Hodges, WHO consultant and expert on pollution law, has suggested that the Indian Government should create a revolving fund for the provision of soft loans to industrialists for setting up effluent treatment plants. Voluntary organisations like the Bombay Society for the Creation and Prevention of Clean Environment (SOCLEEN) are urgently needed so as to focus public attention on environment ethics and the interrelationship and complexities of environmental issues. There is a great danger of the spread of leprosy in Tamil Nādu.

*The Housing Problem* is another acute result of population growth in towns and even in certain villages. The Tamil Nādu Housing Board has evolved a low-cost design suitable for the rural population. First it proposes to start 200 units at Guduvancheri to be constructed in two years. Water should be drawn from a common well and supplied from an overhead tank.

The Reserve Bank study group has suggested that the commercial banks should provide to this sector Rs. 75 crores. But even this is a drop in the ocean. Taking the rural and the urban areas, there is a shortage of about 16 million dwelling units in the country even according to conservative estimates.

Meanwhile, the HDFC Loan for Housing the Rs. 25 crores Housing Developing Finance Corporation Ltd. (HDFC) of the Government of India set up last year, will provide housing for middle and low income groups, as well as for

industrial and rural workers. The HDFC will offer long-term loan finance on moderate terms for construction, purchase and ownership of residential houses in urban rural areas all over India.

In Tamil Nādu it is gratifying to learn that a huge housing complex has arisen at Arumbakkam on the western outskirts of Madras, specifically to benefit the economically weaker sections. The other two schemes, to be taken up shortly, are at Villivakkam, and Kodungaiyur, near Arumbakkam. Several more schemes are being launched by the Government of Tamil Nādu with financial assistance from the World Bank.

### *Family Planning*

For checking over-population, besides the basic measures which can yield only results in the long run, the urgent positive steps must first be considered. Even before the Five Year Planning schemes in India stressed the need for arresting the growth of population, some attempts were made. Faint beginnings of the birth control movement can be traced to the early twenties. Indian representatives attended the first international Birth Control Conference in London in 1922 and the New York Birth Control Conference in 1925. The birth control movement in India became progressively more organised until its culmination in the formation of the Family Planning Association of India in 1949. This Association convened the first All-India Conference on Family Planning in 1951 and an International Conference on Family Planning was organised at Bombay in 1952.

In between these dates—events promoting interest in family planning were 1) the establishment of the Neo-Malthusian League in Madras in 1928 (2) the Mysore Government's direction in 1930 to State Hospitals to give

birth control advice (3) the founding of the *Family Hygiene Society* and of the *Journal of Marriage Hygiene* in 1935 (4) the *Lucknow Population Conference* in 1936 and the useful discussions in it (5) the convening of the *First Family Hygiene Conference* in connection with the Second All-India Population Conference in 1948 and (6) the strong recommendation of the Health Survey and Development Committee for up propagation of family planning as an official taking responsibility.

Regarding the Birth Control controversy between Mahatma Gandhi and modern demographers there appeared differences only regarding methods. The Mahatma wrote over 50 articles urging the need for controlling population in *Young India* and *Harijan* between 1925 and 1946. But he unstintingly advocated self control or Brahmachārya life as the infallible sovereign remedy. He knew abstinence was difficult, but he denied that it was impracticable. At a later stage he counselled avoidance of sexual union during unsafe periods, confining it to the safe period of about 10 days during the month.

(7) The President of the 1938 session of the Congress, S. C. Bose, cried for the need for arresting the growth of population. He constituted the National Planning Committee of the National congress under the chairmanship of Jawaharlal Nehru and it passed several resolutions, the chief of which urged Birth Control. Thereafter, with the advent of Independence, Jawaharlal Nehru as Prime Minister took up the question seriously in connection with his Five Year Planning Scheme.

#### *The Five year Plans and Over-Population in India :*

Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru who evinced a keen interest in the matter of population appointed a Planning

Commission in March 1950. He was himself its Chairman. The general aim was to increase productivity and reduce inequality and the First Plan laid great stress on the development of agriculture and for this a large amount of Rs. 1001 crores was allotted. Industries were not neglected. But the focus of attention was still on large scale industries. The promotion of social welfare, particularly education, health and housing was attended to. On the whole in the various spheres mentioned above, some progress was achieved. But the problem of over-population did not receive direct attention.

The Second Five Year Plan (1956-61) development further on the lines stressed in the 1st Plan. An additional feature was that the village, cottage and small-scale industries were attempted to be promoted in order to improve the condition of the masses and reduce rural unemployment. Another additional feature was that emphasis was laid on the development of transport facilities. Regarding the problem of populations, the Commission was content with stating that "since rates of population growth can be altered only over a period one has to go by the results of trends which commenced earlier." A solution suggested was only a rapid improvement in incomes and levels of living.

The Third Five Year plan (1961—66) witnessed two external events which influenced the pattern of the plan. The Chinese aggression of 1962 and the Pakistan hostility of 1965 demanded a great attention to the question of defence. Therefore, the Third Plan had to provide more for defence than for agricultural and industrial development, though they were not neglected. But the most relevant feature to be noticed here is that the results of the 1961 Census demanded attention to be paid to the question of population. This Census showed an excess of as much as 7 million over what

up to then was considered a high estimate of 431 million in the aggregate. It was in the light of these results that the Plan came out with the following statement—

"A large part of the increase in output is absorbed by the growth of population. Improvement in condition of health and sanitation will further lower death rate, specially the rate of infant mortality and may for a time even tend to raise the birth rate. The objective in stabilising the growth of population over a reasonable period must, therefore, be at the very centre of planned development. The programme of family planning involving intensive education, provision of facilities and advice on the largest effort in every rural and urban community has, therefore, the greatest significance."<sup>4</sup>

The Third Plan, therefore, devoted considerable attention to spelling out the programme, means and logistics of mounting the family planning movement. The growing problem of unemployment, compelled greater attention to the population problem.

The Fourth Plan was started as an emergent, One Year Plan. The supreme aim of the Fourth Plan was to revolutionize agriculture, though the attention on heavy industries was not neglected. The population problem also received attention. The plan urged a nation-wide appreciation of the urgency and gravity of the situation.

**The Fifth Five year Plan:** Again the population problem received great attention. The need for quickness in giving effect to the scheme was realised. The importance of providing minimum public health services was also felt to be a corollary of the population problem. It was felt to be necessary to consolidate past gains in the various fields of health, such as communicable diseases, medical education and provision of infrastructure in the rural areas.

**The Sixth Draft Plan:** (1978—83) : During the period of emergency there were some abuses of Family Planning schemes particularly in U. P. This created a reaction after the Janata Party assumed power. Population measures received a setback for a time. According to reports received by the Central Government from the States, the number of sterilisations during the year ending March 1978 totalled only 9.2 lakhs compared to 8.2 millions recorded in 1976—77. This is unsatisfactory. At the Conference of State Health Ministers in April 1977 the aim for the year was stated to be 4 million sterilisations. But in fact only 25% of this aim could be achieved. Even other devices of birth control measures were found to be unsatisfactory.

One reason is the reaction to the Emergency. Cases have come to the notice of the Government in which the doctors have been reluctant to undertake sterilisation operations even when persons have volunteered. Evidently the doctors have a lurking fear that they may land themselves in trouble if they perform sterilisations. The Prime Minister and the Health Minister had sought to dispel these fears. It remains to be seen whether this will have the desired effect.

The departure from the scheme decided by the previous Government lies in the nomenclature. The words "family planning" have been substituted by "family welfare," "targets" by "levels of performance," and "sterilisations" by "voluntary sterilisations."

But really, the avoidance of the phrase "family planning" has proved counter productive and should again find its due place in the scheme of development. According to a recent study group which comprised leading economists, demographers, journalists, sociologists and medical scientists—the progress in the Draft Plan for 1978—83 relating to minimum

needs, integrated rural development, adult literacy and other welfare measures should be linked with fertility regulation, and family planning should be given a clear and unambiguous place within the strategy of national development as a whole. It is not possible here to assess the various methods of Family Planning adopted in India up to date.

*The Social prejudices against Family Planning:* There are however, obstacles to the adoption of Family Planning. India is a tradition-loaded country. Conservative people are against birth control. Moreover, the Hindus generally believe in the Karma theory which does not help the promotion of Family Planning.

Secondly, the Jan Sangh, in particular, contends that more Hindus than Muslims are being sterilised and that this has its political repercussions. The Hindu point of view is that in a secular democracy the monogamic Hindus will be handicapped. But it should be noted that now Muslims also are taking to Family Planning. The opposition of the Ulemas has become weak. The Roman Catholics were once against compulsory sterilisation. The Cardinal said that according to the U. N. Declaration on the Human Rights, the family is the "the natural and fundamental element of society and the State." Recently he stated that it is the parents who have the right to decide on the number of children.

Thirdly, in India in particular, there is the desire on the part of parents to have children. Many pray in temples for children. Some pray for male children.

Finally, the Communist ideology opposes the Malthusian contention but insists only on proper distribution. It is said that Marxism does not recognise birth control and that it is opposed to its practice. In fact, however, this is not so at

all. Engels, in a private letter wrote : "This is a private matter between husband and wife, and possibly their family doctor." Now, in the Soviet Union, women are free to determine for themselves the number of children. Let us now consider the other basic preventive measures.

### *Fundamental Preventive Measures*

I. *Raise the age of consent*: The maximum age at marriage for girls fixed at 14 by the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929, was raised to 15 in 1957. This, too, was not satisfactory. The Government have recently raised the age of consent to 18 for girls and to 21 for boys.

The age at which young men marry has been slowly going up to 21 years, particularly in urban areas due to extended education, economic necessity, housing shortage and other factors. However, in rural areas the concept of marriage at higher age levels has not spread. If the villages are provided with some new vocational high schools for girls with emphasis on home economics, hygiene and mother craft, the girls could be kept busy, and this might help to postpone marriage by a few years. In Europe the girls marry only between 25 and 28 years.

II. *Elevate the status of women*: The outlook of women should be changed through education and a suitable environment. Their education must be vastly improved. Fight against early marriage and also condemn the irrational attitude to infertility and the unwanted barren woman, the desire for male children, the social ban on widow remarriage, the lack of economic independence for single woman, and the provision of facilities for securing professional careers for women in general reduce the unhappy plight of the widow, divorced and separated woman. A proper approach to these questions will have a direct effect on family size and population growth.

III. *Education*: Special attention must be paid to education. The level of literacy has increased from 24% in 1961 to 29.31% in 1971 to 39.5% for males and 18.4% for females. Clearly 70% of the population is still illiterate. As against this, the level of literacy achieved in Australia, Canada, U. K. and U. S. A. is 95%. While the Constitution of India provided for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete 14 years by 1968-69, only 63% of the children in the age group 6-14 attended the school. Not only is the number of school-going pupils small, but there is a considerable wastage in education. There are many drop-outs at various stages. At present about 23 crores of adults remain illiterate and 6.5 crores of children do not have the benefit of elementary education.

We hear much about Non-formal Education in recent years. One problem is how to improve the educational opportunities for the rural masses and thereby bettering their employability and economic status. Many villagers are unable to pay for their education. It has, therefore, suggested, a "double piercing system" under which the expenses of education of these people will be considered by the Government while those who are economically better off will be charged for their education. Further, it is recommended that the benefits of more efficient teaching and training available in "Independent schools" like public schools should be made accessible to the socially and economically disadvantaged candidates by reserving for them 50% of the seats. However, care should be taken to ensure that this does not lead to a decline in standards.

But the U. G. C. and others have laid stress on organising correspondence courses in core Universities, in core subjects and then extending them to the other Universities; however, to apply it to all subjects will take more than two decades.

Again, non-formal education, if it is to commence from the post-elementary stage will call for a much larger volume of expertise than is being trained and got ready now.

Delink degrees from jobs in order to avoid gate-crashing in Colleges and all should take to education for its own sake.

*Adult Education* must be work-oriented rather than target-oriented. The concerned teachers must cultivate familiarity with the habits of the rural folk.

Free and compulsory education is an urgent problem according to the Directive Principles of State Policy. There has been good progress, but yet it is not satisfactory. It was hoped to bring 90% of the 6-11 age group to school by 1971 and 100% by 1975. But still it is a far off cry.

Prohibition has been introduced in a few states including Tamil Nādu. The enforcement of Prohibition is not easy. Problems of illicit production of liquor have created difficulties for the Police. Education may be of help in this direction, but only after a considerable period of time.

#### *Education on Family Planning :*

During the course of education attention may profitably be paid to the important question of family planning. The Karnataka Government is thinking of introducing family planning education right from the elementary school level. But though that is going to one extreme, ideas on family planning can be introduced in certain stages of education. Perhaps it can be skilfully incorporated in topics on Social Studies in the High School stage. More than that, job-oriented courses in 'Population Planning' can be started in the Universities. In Tamil Nādu except the Annamalai University, the other Universities are not imparting any courses of study on 'Population Planning'. Both demographic research and population are equally important. Fortunately, a two-year project of promoting population education coordinated with workers' education is being launched by the Government of India from October, 1978.

It may be noted that the Kerala University is the only Indian University which has introduced a post-graduate course on Population study.

Since Demography is multi-disciplinary, the training of demographers who are drawn from different disciplines, poses many problems. However, the experience of the Kerala University is encouraging.

*Vocationalisation of Education* is now recognised as a longfelt need and is drawing the attention of educationalists. A large number of high schools and junior colleges are located in rural areas. The education programme in these institutions should take into consideration the family background and the vocational requirement of the pupils. Mostly belonging to the cultivating class, their education must be adapted to agriculture. The areas in the farm enterprise where scientific knowledge can be imported and skills can be developed are: seed production and seed processing; fruit preservation; propagation of plants; bakery technology; rat control; honey production; sericulture; raising nurseries of commercial crops; soil analysis and fertilizer usage; seed treatment; grain storage; inspection and control of stored products pests; production of bacterial cultures; ornamental gardening; dairying; poultry etc.

The vocational programme should be self-supporting and production-oriented. Production skills developed during schooling will create confidence in the pupil to handle the situation he chooses for his vocation.

#### *Urbanization and Migration*

India is usually described as a land of villages and the migration of people to towns has been slow except during certain decades. The causes of this feature are the home-loving character of the Indian people, which is the result

of economic and social causes and of the immobility of the agricultural population rooted to the ground fenced by caste, language and traditional social customs and filled with an innate dread of change of any kind.

Nevertheless, there appeared a spurt in the growth of migration for about four decades after 1931. The increase was at least 30% each decade. On the other hand, the corresponding figures given by the 1971 Census are 19.7% showing only a small change.

Greater Bombay ranks first in the growth of urban density. In 1961 it had 4.15 million; Calcutta came second with 2.93 million, Delhi, third with 2.34 million, Madras, fourth with 1.73 million, Hyderabad, fifth with 1.25 million and Ahmedabad, sixth with 1.5 million. There are numerous towns in the different parts of the country. Intra-urban migration impeded rural urban migration due to the heavy movement of unemployed and underemployed persons into urban areas.

The cry 'Back to Villages' was given a great impetus by Gandhiji. It fitted with his ideal of social reconstruction, development of the *Khadi* and other village industries.

#### *Planning for regional growth and development of villages :*

There are several studies of the growth and location of towns and cities in some States but none on a regional basis. The important problem is to disperse population concentrations regionally and between town and country in such a way as to facilitate the optimum use of national economic assets.

As mentioned earlier, the emphasis on the need for the migration of urban people back to village started with Gandhiji. He observed with great anguish that there is a

wide cultural gap between the urban elite and the rural masses. The urban elite in the large centres is Westernized. There is a notable gap between the attitude of the town folks and life-style of those of the peasants and urban workers. Even between these two broad divisions there are gradations. Generally speaking, the expectation that cities would act as centres of cultural change and dissemination has not been realized in any notable measure.

It may be said that in cities and towns caste distinctions do not appear on the surface as much as class differences. In the villages people of different castes have been living in different streets. The Village Panchayat Raj has encouraged casteism rather than integration of the different groups in a village community. The joint family system was more the rule than the exception in villages.

Gandhiji initiated a programme of village industries to develop a self-sufficient village economy. This is expected to reduce the disparity between towns and villages. The Third Five Year Plan laid down the following requisites for this purpose.

- (1) New industries should be established away from large cities.
- (2) Planning of large industries should be based on regional concept—not ignoring the village.
- (3) Economic interdependence between towns and surrounding rural areas should be strengthened.
- (4) A diversified occupational pattern in rural areas should be aimed at in place of the present extreme dependence on agriculture.

(5) Other measures included (a) aid to village industries (b) promotion of small business (c) location of industries and industrial estates on the periphery of large cities. But most of these prescriptions have proved only theoretical. Industries have an irresistible tendency to cling to cities and towns.

To expatiate upon the development of rural industries is common but it is difficult to be achieved in practice. The Rural-Urban Relationship Committee (1966) correctly observed that urbanization must be considered as a continuous rural-urban transition process, the present differences representing only a stage in the ultimate realization of the noble aim of Gandhiji and more recent social reformers. In actual practice rural-urban migration in search of employment has been steadily progressing.

But in addition to the introduction of new industries in villages, some of the age old crafts could be revived. For ages there have been a number of experienced craftsmen and artisans, and their services could be utilized to train other people who could be enabled to earn their livelihood with self-respect. This can go ahead along with the starting of small-scale industries. The workers in the villages can be employed for providing infrastructure activities like laying roads, bridges and provision of watersupply. The present organisations of co-operative societies should be converted into multiple co-operative societies. Some industrial magnates can voluntarily come forward to open new industries in villages, if necessary with Government aid.

Diary scheme brings cheer and income to village women. Cottage industries as well as suitable handicrafts can be encouraged in which both men and women can co-operate. Women in particular can take to tailoring, embroidery work,

cane work etc. In Tamil Nādu nearly 30,000 persons had been absorbed in the small sector manufacturing matchboxes. But several small industries are languishing, as for example, the handloom industry.

*Distribution on the basis of sex :*

That brings us to the question of the variation in sex ratio in India. It is commonly observed that in the Western hemisphere, the trend has been in favour of a feminine population, whereas in Asia in general and particularly in India, the trend has been in favour of a masculine population. This trend has persisted till to-day.

All over the world, there is a general observance of an excess of male births over the female births, but whereas this trend is reversed in the advanced nations, in India, the loss of more females after birth due to insufficient attention and care given to girls after birth, functional derangements after puberty etc result in excess of males over females. It must be noted that females per 1000 males were only 932 at the time of the 1971 Census in India, while in U. S. S. R. this ratio was 1,170 and in the U. S. A. 1050. Even according to the Census of 1921 itself the number of males in India was 163,995,554 and that of females was 154,946,926, giving a proportion of 945 females to every 1000 males.

The cause for such a feature is that in India, unlike elsewhere, after the period of adolescence is reached, the death—rate amongst females shows an excess over that of males contrary to European experience. (1) An explanation is afforded by the existence of certain social practices such as that of the purdah which is specially disastrous in its effects on the health of women both among Muslims, and in certain regions near Muslim areas, among Hindus also.

(2) Prevalence of early marriages carry risks of early motherhood. Nervous debility, consumption and uterine diseases create havoc among them. (3) Another subtle cause is that in India female life is held cheaper than in the West not only by men but by the women themselves and this results in a deliberate neglect of health in the case of females. (4) Women workers in field or factory are seldom in a position to enjoy the necessary period of rest before and after delivery which impairs their physique and (5) until recently, unskilful midwifery.

Another peculiarity of sex-distribution in India is that the deficiency of the females in the general population is further greatly accentuated in the population of the towns, in contrast with the exactly opposite conditions which prevail in Western countries where females are largely in excess of males in the towns. This is accounted for by the migratory character of the factory hands who seldom bring their families to the towns, and secondly, by the relatively very much smaller employment of women in town industries. The number of women per thousand males in 1921 was only 500 in Calcutta and 524 in Bombay.

It need scarcely be pointed out that this shortage of females in the towns adversely affects the health, comfort and morals of the workers. The position of the females in India has to be improved.

Among the measures recommended on the basis of the survey of the living conditions in the Union territory of Delhi (in 1977) includes 2% reservation for widows in Government jobs. Most of them, particularly rural Hindu widows, were all married at the age of 16 or under.

According to the survey done by the Department of Social Welfare, a large majority (62.6%) reported that they were forced to wear simple clothes and shun showy dresses. Visits to their relatives and friends were reduced. A majority reported that with the demise of their husbands, their health had deteriorated often suffering from headaches, disturbed sleeps etc.

Many had become widows when they were 36 years or under. A majority were against remarriage on the ground that it was against their religion. About 22% of them felt that those who were childless and below 30 years of age should remarry. Only 2% expressed the desire to remarry.

There was an appreciable reduction in the family income after widowhood. The study disclosed that the earnings of Christian widows were higher than those of Hindu and Muslim widows.

About 94.62% of them had to work full time to run the family. Most of them were holding Class IV jobs, like sweepers, *āyāhs*, peons, gardeners and packers. The urban self-employed widows were mostly engaged in knitting, tailoring, selling vegetables and delivering milk. More Muslim (56.94%) widows had taken up employment in comparison to Hindu (48.77%) and Christian (41.18%) widows.

The sample data indicated that literacy percentage of widows in rural areas was very low. As many as 93.33% were illiterate as compared with 53.14% of the urban widows. Out of the 150 rural widows only 10 had some education.

The study group recommended 2% reservation of jobs for widows by the Government and relaxation of their qualifications for their appointment. The other recommendations included allotment of shops on preferential basis, provision

of raw materials and loans on concessional rates, establishment of vocational training centres, setting up of co-operatives for the sale of their products etc. A majority suggested the introduction of a pension scheme for those without any, economic support.

*Water for villages:* This is the last question to be considered but really it occupies a prominent place. Many villages and several towns suffer from lack of adequate water supply. In 1971, Tamil Nâdu set up an autonomous Board to tackle Water Supply and Drainage. This (T. W. A. D.) Board has executed some projects, major and minor, rural and urban in these years. How has it gone about this work?

We must remember first, the magnitude of the problem. Out of 58,595 villages and hamlets in the State, 4,916 villages do not have any source of water supply. About 2,230 villages have water that is polluted and they cause diseases. And over 11,800 villages face chronic scarcity conditions during summer.

Of course, it is admitted that among villages, there are variations in respect of the available water supply. Nevertheless in the Government's actions in general, there has been haphazard execution. The rural schemes are being implemented under five different groups, namely (1) UNICEF assisted scheme (2) Minimum Needs Programme (3) Drought Relief Programme (4) Water supply to Harijan Colonies and (5) Special drought relief work. Under each of these heads some substantial efforts have been undertaken in the very recent years.

So far there had been no uniform procedure in undertaking the scheme. A time-bound plan has to be drawn up and executed systematically.

For towns, most of which have protected water supply schemes, it is only augmentation of the existing schemes that is needed.

For protected water supply in villages, it will be good if the Big Business Houses help in opening wells or Bore wells with chlorination and where electricity is available with overhead tanks and taps. If a Company undertook to provide just this facility for a few villages every year and supervise and maintain the related equipment, it would have made a useful contribution. It is gratifying to learn on 28th August 1978 that the Government of India have made provision for 2.75 lakhs of wells and 2.25 lakhs of wells equipped with water pumps and other equipments.

The City and suburbs of Madras feel acute scarcity of water, particularly during the summer months. The Tamil Nādu Government has allotted Rs. 1.23 crores for improving the supply to the City. There are two main regions with their peculiar problems. One is the Tiruvanmiyur region on the vicinity of which have grown up the urban areas like Sastri Nagar, Besant Nagar, Indra Nagar and Kamaraj Nagar. The water supply for these areas is only 2 lakh gallons. It is now proposed to double it by the contemplated scheme.

In North Madras drinking water as well as water for industries is to be augmented. This is described as the Manali and Tamarappakkam projects. It is important to notice that the World Bank, a Committee of which is at present in the City of Madras, has also come forward to render aid to these projects. It is relevant in this connection to notice that the World Health Organisation has estimated that 80 percent of all sickness and disease in the world is attributable to contaminated water. Though the example of Tamil Nādu is considered here, basically the features are common to the whole of India.

Taking an overall picture of the population trends in India, we have little reason to be complacent. True, much has been done to relieve the multitudinous problems arising from the ever-increasing population. As mentioned earlier, it is expected that by 2000 A. D. our population would reach the staggering figure of approximately 969 million. Many schemes have been tried to arrest this prodigious growth and also to combat the consequences. Nevertheless, the prospects are none too rosy. In addition to all the above-mentioned devices of control what more positive solution can be offered? Several suggest Communism as the way to combat the situation. But I personally feel that it is not suited to Indian conditions and traditions. Whether religious or not, we have developed a socio-religious system which throws even economic suffering to the background. What is worse, Communism of whatever brand we think of, leads to a type of dictatorship, as for instance, the Chinese government was for many years, under Mao's government. Further, the approach is negative. Man does not live by bread alone, nor by ephemeral flippant merry-making. It is my view that Indian traditions are unsuited to Communism, whether it is dictatorship of the Proletariat, or dictatorship of one or a few ring leaders.

Then, shall we provoke a Third World War and annihilate most of us? It is absurd. Here I suggest one method which is no doubt fantastic. The U. N. must approach the whole problem not only in a negative way but in a positive way, too. A well-organised, civilized, unselfish and rational distribution of the population in the world in respect of the resources must be undertaken. A move has been made in this direction. But it has to be squarely and firmly faced. Countries like Africa, South America, Australia, Central and Northern Asia have large vacant areas. Several of the countries of the Arab world can accommodate thousands. These have to be

persuaded to be accommodative without allowing politics to interfere with the solution. Regions in South East Asia must change their outlook. That, to my mind, is one of the important devices of facing a grave all-absorbing problem. At the same time Family Planning also must be seriously adopted.

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### **N O T E S**

- I. How glaringly disparate statements are made about this language affair even by responsible men!
  2. J. D. Rockefeller, the oil-magnate, was very much concerned with over-population problem. Therefore, very recently he set up the Population Council and he serves as its Chairman, and has got the signature of thirty world leaders on a population statistics presented to the United Nations in 1967.
  3. Japan, during the 70 years from 1873 to 1942, saw the stupendous growth of approximately 136%.
  4. Third Five Year Plan, Chapter II, Long Term Economic Development, para 13.
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Born in 1905 and educated in different parts of South India I became a lecturer in 1927 and subsequently the Professor of History in the Presidency College Madras. Appointed in 1954 as Professor of Indian History in the University of Madras, I became in 1961 Professor of Area Studies in the same University. Retiring from the University, I took up the Directorship of the Institute of Traditional Cultures of South and South East Asia, succeeding Prof. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri. Thus I have had association with the handling of problems of history and culture for well over half a century.

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K. K. PILLAY.

